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# **HUMAN MUTABILITY AND MYSTICAL CHANGE:**

**EXPLORATIONS IN ANCIENT JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY**

**BY**

**TYSON L PUTTHOFF**

**SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION**

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**HUMAN MUTABILITY AND MYSTICAL CHANGE:  
EXPLORATIONS IN ANCIENT JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY**

**TYSON L PUTTHOFF**

**ABSTRACT**

The following thesis seeks to understand ancient Jewish ideas concerning the present ontological state of humankind—to which we refer in terms of ancient Jewish *ontoanthropology*—by exploring tales about humans thought to have had a mystical encounter with the divine and to have undergone ontological change as a result. For beliefs about human mutability and mystical change cannot be grasped without an appreciation for the principal ontoanthropology underlying them, and vice versa. It is our contention, therefore, that any text which advances a mystical change assumes the human to be an intrinsically mutable creature. And it is our aim to gain knowledge of ancient Jewish ideas on such matters.

The project consists of eight chapters. Chapter one introduces the subject, reviews pertinent literature and sets forth the approach and method to be utilised. Chapters two and three investigate Hekhalot Zutarti in the Hekhalot literature and Philo Judaeus' *De opificio mundi*, respectively. It is demonstrated here how each work shows a deep concern for the mystical-transformative experience of the individual. Chapters four and five analyse Serekh ha-Yahad in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Paul's letter to the Philippians. Here it is shown that the principal concern is the communal mystical-transformative experience. Chapters six and seven explore a motif in which humans are said to be able to ingest the presence of God and thereupon undergo ontological transformation. It is argued that this motif is critical to the message of *Joseph and Aseneth* and of utmost importance to tractate *Sotah* of the Babylonian Talmud. Our findings and chief contention will be revisited in chapter eight.

In the end, the various explorations comprising the chapters will lead towards an aggregate portrait of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. By studying accounts of mystical change, we gain insight into ancient Jewish beliefs about the transformative experience of those who encounter the divine in this life. We also gain understanding of the deeper assumptions about the inherent mutability and ontological potentiality of the human creature which underlie those accounts of mystical change.

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## **DECLARATION**

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is entirely my own work. None has been submitted previously to the University of Durham or to any other university for a degree.

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Andi. At first it seems almost an insult to try to summarise my gratitude, my appreciation, my affection and my love for Andi in something called an ‘acknowledgments’ section prefixed to the beginning of a research project. But when I think about it, given the nature of my project, it seems at least fitting that I get the opportunity to write about Andi here. My project is about the encounter with God. It is about the otherworldly experience. And it is about transformation. When I am with Andi, I see God. She takes me to another place. And because of her, I am changed—I am a better man. When I read a collection of ancient tales about people who believe they saw God face to face, I know in my heart that when I see Andi, I too see God’s face.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### PRIMARY TEXTS

<i>‘Abot. R. Nat.</i>	<i>‘Abot of Rabbi Nathan</i>
<i>Abr.</i>	<i>Philo, De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>Philo, De agricultura</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Josephus, Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Antr. Nymph.</i>	<i>Porphyry, De antro nympharum</i>
<i>Apoc. Ab.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
<i>Apoc. Sedr.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Sedrach</i>
<i>Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 6-11</i>
<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud (Bavli)</i>
<i>B. Bat.</i>	<i>Baba Batra</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)</i>
<i>3 Bar.</i>	<i>3 Baruch (Greek Apocalypse)</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakhot</i>
<i>C. Ap.</i>	<i>Josephus, Contra Apion</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Philo, De confusione linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>Philo, De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Corp. Herm.</i>	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>
<i>Det.</i>	<i>Philo, Quod Deterius Potiori insidari soleat</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)</i>
<i>3 En.</i>	<i>3 Enoch (Hebrew Apocalypse)</i>
<i>Ezek. Trag.</i>	<i>Ezekiel the Tragedian</i>
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i>
<i>Georg.</i>	<i>Vergil, Georgica</i>
<i>Gk. Apoc. Ezra</i>	<i>Greek Apocalypse of Ezra</i>
<i>Hag.</i>	<i>Hagigah</i>
<i>Hul.</i>	<i>Hullin</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Hekhalot Rabbati</i>
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Hekhalot Zutarti</i>
<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Homer, Iliad</i>
<i>Jos.</i>	<i>Philo, De Iosepho</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Ketub.</i>	<i>Ketubim</i>
<i>L.A.B.</i>	<i>Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)</i>
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Aristeas</i>
<i>m.</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>
<i>Midr.</i>	<i>Midrash</i>
<i>2 Macc.</i>	<i>2 Maccabees</i>
<i>3 Macc.</i>	<i>3 Maccabees</i>
<i>4 Macc.</i>	<i>4 Maccabees</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Ovid, Metamorphoses</i>

<i>Migr.</i>	Philo, <i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
MM	Ma'aseh Merkavah
MR	Merkavah Rabbah
<i>Nat.</i>	Pliny the Elder, <i>Naturalis historia</i>
<i>Nat. Fac.</i>	Galen, <i>On the Natural Faculties</i>
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Odes. Sol.</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Pesiq. Rab.</i>	<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>
<i>Pesiq. Rab Kah.</i>	<i>Pesiqta de Rab Kahana</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Pirqe R. El.</i>	<i>Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	Philo, <i>De plantatione</i>
<i>Ps-J.</i>	(Targum) Pseudo-Jonathan
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>QE</i>	<i>Quaestiones et xxömischen in Exodum I, II</i>
<i>Qidd.</i>	<i>Qiddushin</i>
<i>Ques. Ezra</i>	<i>Questions of Ezra</i>
<i>Rab.</i>	<i>Rabbah</i> (+ biblical book)
<i>Rep.</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i>
<i>Roš Haš.</i>	<i>Roš Hašanah</i>
<i>Šabb.</i>	<i>Šabbat</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
SH	Sefer Hekhalot
ShP	Sar ha-Panim
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	Plato, <i>Sophist</i>
SQ	Shi'ur Qomah
<i>Symp.</i>	Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
<i>t.</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
<i>Ta'an.</i>	<i>Ta'anit</i>
<i>Tg.</i>	<i>Targum</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>T. Ab.</i>	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>
<i>T. Isaac</i>	<i>Testament of Isaac</i>
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>Vis. Ezra</i>	<i>Vision of Ezra</i>
Wis	Wisdom
<i>y.</i>	<i>Jerusalem Talmud (Yerushalmi)</i>

## SECONDARY LITERATURE

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library

ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AJSR</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
ALGJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AMS	The Artscroll Mesorah Series
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Edited by Hans Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin, 1972–Present
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ANTJ	Arbeiten zum Neuen Testament und Judentum
AOS	American Oriental Society
AP	Ancient Philosophies
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASORMS	American Schools of Oriental Research Monograph Series
BAGD	Bauer, W., W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 2d ed. Chicago, 1979
BASORSup	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplement Series
BBC	Broadman Bible Commentaries
BBHR	Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 3d ed. Bauer, Walter. Revised, Edited and Translated by F. Wilbur Gingrich, William F. Arndt and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	<i>The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon.</i> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BEL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BET	Beiheft zur Evangelischen Theologie
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
Brockelmann	Carolo Brockelmann. <i>Lexicon Syriacum.</i> 2d Edition. Halis Saxonum, Sumptibus Max Niemeyer, 1928
BRS	The Biblical Resource Series
BSGRT	Bibliotheca scriptorium Graecorum et Romanorum

	Teubneriana
BSJS	Brill's Series in Jewish Studies
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BZWKK	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCP	Cambridge Companions to Philosophy
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 BC to AD 200
CDSSE	<i>The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English</i> . Translated by Geza Vermes. 5th rev. ed. London: Penguin Books, 1998
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CHJ	<i>The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period</i> . Edited by Steven T. Katz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006
CJS	Classics in Judaic Studies
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
Costaz	Louis Costaz, S.J. <i>Dictionnaire Syriaque-Français: Syriac- English Dictionary</i> . 3d ed. Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq, 2002
CP	<i>Classical Philosophy</i>
CPP	Central Problems of Philosophy
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CQ NS	<i>Church Quarterly</i> New Series
CQS	Companion to the Qumran Scrolls
CR	<i>Currents in Research</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CS	Collected Studies
CSCO	Corpus scriptorium christianorum orientalium
CSHJTYI	Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism
CSR	Contributions to the Study of Religion
CSRS	Cognitive Science in Religion Series
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EB	Expositor's Bible
ECL	Early Christianity and its Literature
EDSS	Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls
EJL	Early Judaism and its Literature
EncJud	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . Edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum. 22 vols. 2d ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>



<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCBSS	Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series
<i>FJB</i>	<i>Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FthS	Freiburg theologische Studien
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HFT	Handbooks for Translators
HL 1885	The Hibbert Lectures 1885
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IOS</i>	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IUPAC	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow. <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> . 2d ed. New York: Putnam, 1903
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JCC	Jewish Culture and Contexts
Jennings	William Jennings. <i>Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament (Peshitta): With Copious References, Dictions, Names of Persons and Places and Some Various Readings Found in the Curetonian, Sinaitic Palimpsest Philoxenian &amp; Other MSS</i> . Revised by Ulric Gantillon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JQR NS	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review New Series</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSJTSup	Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought Supplement

<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSOR</i>	<i>Journal of the Society of Oriental Research</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>JSSR</i>	<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>
JSTTC	Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and Church</i>
JTECL	Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LBIY</i>	<i>Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook</i>
LBS	Library of Biblical Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LJPPSTT	Literature of the Jewish People in the Second Temple Period and the Talmud
LLJC	The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
MH	Magic in History
<i>MJ</i>	<i>Modern Judaism</i>
Moulton and Milligan	Moulton, James Hope, and George Milligan. <i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</i> . London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930
NA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>NAJP</i>	<i>North American Journal of Psychology</i>
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NF	Neutestamentliche Forschungen
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NIBCNT	New International Bible Commentary on the New Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975–1985
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NIPS</i>	<i>History and Philosophy of Logic</i>
NIVHNO	Nederlands instituut voor het nabije oosten: studia francisci scholten memoriae dicata
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements

NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	New Testament Theology
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>
OSAP	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985
PI: CEUSH	Pasts Incorporated: Central European University Studies in the Humanities
PA	Philosophia antiqua
PACS	Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series
PEAJSC	Proceedings of the European Association for Jewish Studies Congree
PR	<i>Philosophical Review</i>
PSCCHSHMC	Protocol Series of the Colloquies. Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture
PTSDSSP	Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
QD	Quaestiones disputatae
QR	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RelSoc	<i>Religion and Society</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RP	Religious Perspectives
RR	<i>Review of Religion</i>
RS	<i>Religious Studies</i>
RT	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
RVG	Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart
SA	Scriptores Aethiopici
SAIS	Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SDSSRL	Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature
SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
SGKA	Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des altertums
SGPSPS	Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems from Plato to Spinoza

SHPS	<i>Studies in History and Philosophy of Science</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SJ	Studia Judaica
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SL	Sammlung theologischer Lehrbücher
Smith	J. Payne Smith. <i>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary: Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith.</i> Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
SPA	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
Spec	<i>Speculum</i>
SPhA	Studies in Philo of Alexandria
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
SS	Schleier und Schwelle
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
StPB	Studia Post-Biblica
StudBib	Studia Biblica
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SUNYSJ	State University of New York Series in Judaica
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TJ	<i>Theologische Jahrbücher</i>
TLOT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
UNT	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
VE	<i>Vox evangelica</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WEC	The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WP	Working Papers, Faculty of Theology, Biblical Studies Section, University of Copenhagen
WS	World Spirituality
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

*ZNW*                      *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die  
Kunde der älteren Kirche*  
*ZWKK*                   *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die  
Kunde der älteren Kirche*

## **PART I**

### **MAPPING THE COURSE**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

The Jewish people have long displayed an interest in what it means to be human. This interest seems to have grown, at least in part, out of ancient traditions about humankind having been created **בצלם אלהים**—in the image of God. In their earliest days of existence, humankind enjoyed immortality, incorruptibility and, according to some, divinity. Much has changed since that idyllic period in history, however, and humans no longer look or act like creatures created in the divine image. Straining to make sense of existence in God's once-pristine, now-corrupted order, Jewish thinkers devised remarkable ideas concerning humankind. Of especial interest for our study are those ideas concerning the *present ontological state of humankind*—that is, the substance, property, material, composition, essence, *stuff* or overall state of being or existence in which they find themselves at the present time (see §1.2.1). Indeed, the drudgeries of life in a fallen creation compelled many to seek answers not only about the past and the future *but about the here and now*. If humans were *this* in the past and will become *that* in the future, what *are* they—or *what are they capable of becoming*—right now in the present?

##### 1.1.1 THE PRESENT EXPLORATION

Even after these preliminary remarks, it seems axiomatic that the mutability of the human creature is inherent in ancient Jewish conceptions of humankind. The present exploration thus enquires into ancient Jewish conceptions of human mutability and mystical change. It investigates what ancient Jews believed about the present ontological state of humankind and attempts to lay out a sketch for understanding

what we call an *ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism* (see §1.2.1). It should be noted that we are not interested in questions about the *reality* of humanity—about whether humans exist or not—as are others who study questions in ontology. Our interest lies instead in questions about the qualitative pliability and mutable potentiality of the material, property, substance, composition or *stuff* of which the human creature is made.

Driving our exploration is the idea that ontological change is most clearly visible when the human creature is pressed to extremes. When exposed to fire, for example, the human creature breaks down. It is simply incapable of withstanding extreme heat in its natural ontological state. The situation is heightened when the human is met with an element, substance or being that is in fact *not of this world*. That is, the human creature is pressed to its ontological limits when in the presence of the divine—whether it is the presence of God himself, his ministering angels, sacred texts or other celestial realities—more than at any other time. Encountering the divine therefore always carries profound transformative consequences for human beings.

Since ancient Jewish ideas about the human assume it to be an inherently mutable creature, as we suggested above, tales of mystical transformation seem a natural place to conduct an exploration such as ours. For in such accounts one gains insight into what the human creature is in its *natural* state, what causes it to be changed, and the inherent transformative potentiality it possesses. Certainly one might find answers to our questions by studying accounts of future transformation. The problem is that these speak more to questions about human existence in the future rather than in the present. Accounts of present change better help us to answer questions about human existence in the here and now. As will soon become clear, Jewish writers were well aware of and highly concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of those tales, traditions and practices surrounding the experience of



ontological transformation. By exegeting texts that speak of mystical change, we shall thus be able to take a step back, as it were, and analyse the details in the light of the broader philosophical, theological and anthropological questions motivating the accounts. It will become clear that beneath the often variegated expressions of the mystical-transformative experience lies a fairly consistent ontoanthropology.

### **1.1.2 THE THESIS**

Our chief contention can therefore be framed as follows. *We contend that accounts of mystical change shed light, on the one hand, on ancient Jewish beliefs about the transformative experience of those who encounter the divine directly in this life, and on the other, on ideas concerning the inherent mutability and ontological potentiality of the human creature.* We will demonstrate that while ancient accounts of the mystical-transformative experience ostensibly betray little more than primitive thinking on a mysterious and ambiguous experience, the case is quite the converse. Ancient Jews in fact put much thought into such matters. Our exploration will thus reflect on the various accounts of the mystical-transformative experience in order, in each chapter and at the conclusion of the thesis, to sketch out an ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism.

### **1.1.3 THE VALUE OF OUR EXPLORATION**

The value of an exploration of accounts of mystical change is threefold. First, a lack of comprehensive and straightforward investigation has left vital details concerning mystical change buried in the ancient texts. Given that so many scholars see this phenomenon as having an important place in ancient Judaism, it is imperative that it receive a full-length treatment.

Second, upon bringing to light the details of such texts, we are led naturally to inquire about the deeper theological and philosophical ideas

driving them. A text that describes a mystical transformation after all holds certain assumptions about the ontological mutability of the human creature. Without being mutable on some level, that is to say, human transformation would simply not be possible.

Third, our approach and methodology provide the field a way of investigating and quantifying the subject at hand. This is crucial, for it seems that one of the principal reasons the subject lacks comprehensive scholarly treatment is precisely because the field has yet to come up with a standardised way of dealing with such matters. We move towards a remedy for this problem by offering definitions of terms that others might use in their own studies of the subject. We have also created an algorithm (see §1.5) by which to classify and categorise our findings in a way that leads us towards a fuller comprehension of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology.

#### **1.1.4 METHODOLOGICAL ECLECTICISM**

The approach and methodology we adopt finds expression in what Moshe Idel calls ‘methodological eclecticism’.<sup>1</sup> We are open to engaging with virtually any ancient or modern method, theory or concept that helps us achieve our primary aim. In particular, our approach and method have been designed specifically to fit a project which is concerned both with the details of the individual texts under investigation and with the broader ontoanthropological ideas undergirding them. We have designed an algorithm which assists us in analyzing each of the texts in question and deriving ideas concerning the ontological and anthropological beliefs contained therein. Just as any algorithm does, ours takes into account key factors which, when added together, lead us towards a solution. That solution is a preliminary understanding of ancient Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (PI: CEUSH 2; New York: CEU, 2005), 1, 9, 11.

ontoanthropology. Setting such matters aside for the moment, our methodology will be picked back up and spelled out in detail below in §§1.4–1.5.

## 1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

One will find that among scholarly works on the present subject key terms are often poorly defined or left undefined altogether. The result of this scholarly misstep is that we are left with a very uneven and uncertain platform on which to dialogue with one another. A careful discussion and definition of our terms thus has consequences that extend well beyond our study.

### 1.2.1 ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

If *anthropology* is the study of humankind more generally, then *ontoanthropology* is the study of the ontology of the human creature more specifically. Ontology is that branch of metaphysics concerned with questions of *being* (from ὄντος). There are two broad usages of the term ‘ontology’, only one of which applies to our study. There are those who study questions surrounding the reality of existence. Using formal logic, they seek to know whether or not things that are alleged to exist actually *do* exist—i.e. whether or not things really are real. This aspect of ontology is beyond the scope of our study.

There are also those who study, for lack of a better word, the *nature* of things that exist. Roberto Poli explains that ‘formal ontology’ in particular investigates categories such as ‘thing, process, matter, whole, part, and number’.<sup>2</sup> Ontology in this sense deals with these categories on

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<sup>2</sup> Roberto Poli, ‘Descriptive, Formal and Formalized Ontologies’, in *Husserl’s Logical Investigations Reconsidered* (CP 48; ed. D. Fisette; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003), 193–210 [193–4]. Cf. idem, ‘Husserl’s Conception of Formal Ontology’, *HPL* 14 (1993):

their own terms as well as how they relate to one another.<sup>3</sup> Those who study such categories and relationships are concerned with the overall nature of things as well as the particulars that constitute those things. Our interest is on the present ontological state of being of humans and humankind.

It should be noted that the hyphenated term ‘onto-anthropology’ (*Onto-Anthropologie*) is in fashion among certain philosophers.<sup>4</sup> To avoid confusion, however, we have removed the hyphen. Moreover, we use ‘ontology’, ‘ontological’ and ‘ontic’ as synonyms. Thus while someone versed in the thinking of Martin Heidegger, for example, might distinguish between the *ontisch* and *ontologisch*, we shall make no distinction.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.2.2 MYSTICISM AND THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Designations like ‘mysticism’ and the ‘mystical experience’ have proven immeasurably difficult to define. As a consequence, some scholars of Jewish mysticism have either adopted questionable definitions or left their terms undefined altogether, both of which moves seem problematic.<sup>6</sup> The scene is different among phenomenologists of mysticism, who have made substantial progress in recent decades in defining their terms.

The progress they have made stems from their choice to bypass that ethereal concept of mysticism and focus more specifically on the mystical experience. Mysticism seems too plagued by confusion and

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1–14; Liliana Albertazzi, ‘Formal and Material Ontology’, in *Formal Ontology* (NIPS 53; eds. R. Poli and P.M. Simons; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), 199–232.

<sup>3</sup> Dale Jacquette, *Ontology* (CPP; Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University, 2002), 240–3.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Peter Sloterdijk, *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 156; idem, *Das Menschentreibhaus: Stichworte zur historischen und prophetischen Anthropologie* (Weimar: Vlg und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2001), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson; New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 1–9, 355.

dispute to be useful in moving the conversation forward at this point. Among those taking this approach is Jess Byron Hollenback, who observes several traits common to mystical experiences which transcend temporal and geographical bounds.<sup>7</sup> Hollenback describes the mystical experience as involving a radical shift in one's mode of consciousness even in the present life. This experience involves the obtainment of otherwise privileged information, generally having to do with deep philosophical or theological matters that his or her culture views as of utmost importance.<sup>8</sup> And even amid the many differences among mystical experiences around the world, a select few commonalities link them together.<sup>9</sup>

Philip Alexander has also made valuable contributions in the area of nomenclature in his work on the DSS.<sup>10</sup> Like Hollenback, Alexander points out that the mystical experience cannot be properly understood if divorced from its historical context. The analyses of Hollenback as a phenomenologist and Alexander as a scholar of Judaism are highly important. They prove that it is possible to arrive at a definition of the mystical experience that is specific enough to fit the nuanced accounts we find in ancient Jewish literature, but broad enough to be applied to the six 'varieties' of ancient Judaism, whose differences are oftentimes as numerous as its similarities (see §1.2.5).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jess Byron Hollenback, *Mysticism: Experience, Response, and Empowerment* (University Park, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania State, 1996), 33–134; Cf. Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 123; F. Samuel Brainard, 'Defining Mystical Experience', *JAAR* 64 (Summer 1996): 359–93 [364].

<sup>8</sup> On knowledge in mysticism, see Nelson Pike, 'On Mystic Visions as Sources of Knowledge', in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (ed. S.T. Katz; Oxford: OUP, 1978), 214–34; Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism and Merkabah Mysticism* (BSJS 13; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 145–7; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (NTOA 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 1; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 9–10, 14, 272; idem and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (CRINT 3; JETCL 12; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert K.C. Forman, *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* (Albany: SUNY, 1999), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Philip S. Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Documents* (CQS 7; LSTS 61; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 7–10.

<sup>11</sup> For the contextualist view of mystical experience, see Katz (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*; Felicitas D. Goodman, *Where the Spirits Ride the Wind: Trance Journeys and Other Ecstatic Experiences* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, 1990), 17. For an

With this brief overview in mind, we can now offer our own definition of the mystical experience. It is our view that *a mystical experience occurs when someone living in the present life, either by means of intensive preparatory activities or by unsolicited rapture, enters a state of consciousness such that he or she makes direct contact with the divine*. In other words, an experience is ‘mystical’ only if it involves a divine-human encounter (DHE; see §1.5.2), takes place in the present life and, generally speaking, entails some type of cognitive or somatic pre-conditioning.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly if one were not comfortable seeing the textual deposit as a record of experience, one could simply remove the noun ‘experience’ from our designation, while nevertheless retaining the adjective ‘mystical’ and avoiding the more problematic ‘mysticism’. But scholars of ancient Judaism and early Christianity have begun to demonstrate the experiential nature of the texts to be unavoidable.<sup>13</sup> We shall not here delve into this debate, but we align with those who see some type of experience as lying behind the texts. Their proprietors were after all human beings.

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overview of this debate, see Larry Short, ‘Mysticism, Mediation, and the Non-Linguistic’, *JAAR* 63 (1995): 659–75. For a modified universalist view, see Robert K.C. Forman, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> On the pursuit of mystical experience in Judaism and elsewhere, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: YUP, 1988), 74–111; Peter Moore, ‘Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique’, in *Philosophical Analysis*, 101–31; Felicitas D. Goodman and Nana Nauwald, *Ecstatic Trance: New Ritual Body Postures: A Workbook* (trans. A. Altieri et al.; Havelte, Holland: Binkey Kok, 2003), 7–8; Adam J. Rock et al., ‘The Effect of Shamanic-like Stimulus Conditions and the Cognitive-perceptual Factor of Schizotypy on Phenomenology’, *NAJP* 10 (2008): 79–98; J.W. Kremer and Stanley C. Krippner, ‘Trance Posture’, *ReVision* 16 (1994): 173–82.

<sup>13</sup> On religious experience in early Christianity, see Frances Flannery et al. (eds.), *Experientia, Volume 1: Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (SBLSymS 40; Atlanta: SBL, 2008); Colleen Shantz and Rodney Werline (eds.), *Experientia, Volume 2: Linking Text and Experience* (EJL 35; Atlanta: SBL, 2012); Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle’s Life and Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009); James Buchanan Wallace, *Snatched Into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1–10): Paul’s Heavenly Journey in the Context of Early Christian Experience* (BZWKK 179; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 169–230; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

### 1.2.3 MYSTICAL CHANGE, MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION

A corollary to our definition of the mystical experience is that of mystical change/transformation. We define the latter as follows. *A mystical change occurs when a human, upon encountering the divine in the present life, undergoes transformation such that the ontological state of either part or all of his or her being becomes altered in a positive, supernatural way.*

Four points should be mentioned briefly. First, only those who are human to begin with and who undergo ontological change fit the scope of our study. Angels or other divine beings who become human-like are excluded. Second, a number of expressions of mystical change can be found in ancient Judaism. Our exploration focuses, however, on change that is ontological. It must entail an alteration in the human body, mind or general state of existence. Third, we only discuss accounts in which the human undergoes positive ontological changes. He or she must become improved or restored in some fashion upon encountering the divine. Accounts in which the mystic undergoes destruction without in the end undergoing ontological improvement are excluded from our study. Fourth, only changes that cannot occur without the divine-human encounter are considered mystical transformations. Sanctification or justification that stems not merely from religious praxis but from a DHE fits the scope of our study, but only if it involves ontological change.

### 1.2.4 MYSTICAL EMPOWERMENT

Another phenomenon important to our study is one Hollenback calls 'empowerment'.<sup>14</sup> Empowerment has two principal impacts on our exploration. Firstly, it affects the very content (or lack thereof) of the mystic's experience of the divine. As Hollenback explains, empowerment signifies 'a peculiar and radical enhancement' of the imagination,

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<sup>14</sup> Hollenback, *Mysticism*.

thoughts, emotions and volitions ‘that often emerges when the mystic tightly focuses his or her attention’ on a given object.<sup>15</sup>

Empowerment is to take something—a term, an object or idea—which already has a certain amount of significance in one’s historical milieu and to give it a heightened significance, in this case a *mystical* significance. This item takes on a life and meaning within the mystic’s *mystical* world that is different from that of the same object in his or her *actual* world. What one might interpret in a non-mystical context as hyperbole or metaphor, in a mystical context will be meant to be understood literally.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, mystical empowerment has hermeneutical implications as well. It influences the way a mystic communicates his or her experience to others. Mystics will often choose terms which are inherently ambiguous and which perhaps carry more than one meaning. One will generally find terms that connote both ‘vision’ and ‘cognition’ in reports of mystical experiences (e.g. θεωρία, נִיחָא, etc.). Such a term does exactly what the mystic wants: it communicates an otherwise complex aspect of the mystical experience in a single word.

### 1.2.5 VARIETIES OF ANCIENT JUDAISM

As indicated already, our desire is to sketch out an ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism. But this is far from an easy task. The problem is that ‘ancient Judaism’ embraces the social, political and religious movement spanning from ca. 300 B.C.E. to ca. 800 C.E. The sheer vastness of ancient Judaism demands that one of two things happen. *Either* we provide a comprehensive study of the entire edifice called ancient Judaism—a project that would surely take up many volumes—*or* we find a way of treating it that enables us to consider it carefully and systematically, all

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 30.



the while keeping in mind its variegated and expansive nature. In order to obtain *both* a broad *and* a detailed understanding of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology, we shall focus on texts which represent Rabbinic Judaism proper as well as the various expressions of non-Rabbinic Judaism.

We dissect the whole of ancient Judaism into six literary-historical ‘varieties’. Rabbinic Judaism is one variety, with five other non-rabbinic varieties of Judaism. These include, in the order of their consideration below, Hekhalot-Mystical Judaism (ch. 2), Greek-Philosophical Judaism (ch. 3), Sectarian Judaism (ch. 4), Christian Judaism (ch. 5) and Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism (ch. 6). To distinguish one ‘variety’ from another is not to say that one is somehow more Jewish than another but only that each expresses its Judaism differently. We expand on this division of Judaism more fully in §1.4 following our review of literature, to which we now turn.

### **1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Students will be met with three types of works when searching for literature pertinent to our subject: (1) many which reference transformation more or less in passing; (2) a select few that deal with mystical transformation directly; and (3) even fewer which deal with both transformation and (onto)anthropology together. This third category is largely comprised of Pauline scholars, who have been discussing transformation in Paul more than in the other varieties for some time. Their work extends beyond Paul, however, and is of direct relevance for other areas of ancient Judaism.

### 1.3.1 BRIEF REFERENCES TO MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION

Aside from recent studies of 'self transformation', scholars have begun to recognise the importance of transformation both in Judaism and the NT.<sup>17</sup> Elliot Wolfson remarks, for example, 'Central to [Jewish mysticism] is a visionary ascent that leads to a temporary transformation of the human being into an angel'.<sup>18</sup> He adds that the 'experience of ontic transformation, i.e., becoming divine or angelic' must be present if an account is to be called 'mystical'.<sup>19</sup> While we cannot agree with Wolfson's limited definition of 'mystical' for reasons offered above (§1.1.2), his emphasis on transformation is well taken. Peter Schäfer also recognises the centrality of transformation to ancient Jewish mysticism.<sup>20</sup> In fact, with regard to Wolfson's remarks Schäfer comments, 'Through this ingenious move Wolfson manages to declare angelification an essential part of the Hekhalot literature'.<sup>21</sup> Morton Smith observes the presence of 'deification' in the so-called Self-Glorification Hymn at Qumran.<sup>22</sup> He maintains that the Hymn expresses an experience of 'deification by ascent'.<sup>23</sup> John Collins describes this same account as 'apotheosis' by enthronement.<sup>24</sup> Alan Segal believes that 'mystic transformation' is 'the

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<sup>17</sup> E.g. Jan Assman and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (SHR 83; Leiden: Brill, 1999); David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: PUP, 1994), 186; cf. 84–5, 363.

<sup>19</sup> Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran: A Response to Bilhah Nitzan', *JQR* NS 85 (Jul–Oct 1994): 185–202 [186]; Wolfson, *Speculum*, 83–5, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid; cf. Wolfson, 'Compositions', 193.

<sup>22</sup> Morton Smith, 'Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QM<sup>a</sup>', in *Archeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (ed. L.H. Schiffman; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 181–8; cf. idem, 'Two Ascended to Heaven: Jesus and the Author of 4Q491', in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 290–301.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, 'Deification', 187.

<sup>24</sup> John J. Collins, 'A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in Pre-Christian Judaism', in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (ABRL; eds. J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane; Albany: SUNY, 1995), 43–58.

most important' and 'the most puzzling' aspect of ancient Judaism.<sup>25</sup> The transformation he has in mind appears in accounts in which 'certain heroes can be transformed into angels as part of their ascension'.<sup>26</sup>

A different expression of transformation has attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. This has to do with the role of text-work in effecting mystical changes in human beings.<sup>27</sup> Robin Griffith-Jones, for example, views the Gospel of John as a story in which the reader partakes in the experiences of the characters in the story. Through engagement with the sacred text, the reader shares in the transformation of its characters.<sup>28</sup> Celia Deutsch argues that Philo's *De vita contemplativa* is to be read likewise.<sup>29</sup> The Therapeutae at the heart of the story are not just to be observed, they are to be imitated, and the experience they have in the story is then thought to transfer to the reader.

While scholars recognise the significance of transformation in Judaism and the NT, they generally focus on accounts featuring heavenly journeys, excluding more subtle forms of mystical experience from the discussion. This oversight will find some correction in our third chapter on Philo and again in our seventh on Rabbinic Judaism.

A related issue has to do with the ambiguity as to what the human actually becomes during the transformative experience. As noted, some scholars assume humans become angels, though this is not as conclusive as many would have us think. Guiding our exploration is an algorithm designed, among other things, to test this assumption against the evidence of the texts (see §1.5.6).

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<sup>25</sup> Alan F. Segal, 'Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism', in *Other Worldly Journeys*, 95–122 [101–3].

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>27</sup> Shantz and Werline (eds.), *Experientia*, Volume 2.

<sup>28</sup> Robin Griffith-Jones, 'Transformation by a Text: The Gospel of John', in *Experientia*, Volume 1, 85–124.

<sup>29</sup> Celia Deutsch, 'The Therapeutae, Text Work, Ritual, and Mystical Experience', in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (SBLSymS 11; ed. A.D. DeConick; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 287–312; eadem, 'Visions, Mysteries, and the Interpretative Task: Text Work and Religious Experience in Philo and Clement', in *Experientia*, Volume 1, 83–104.

### 1.3.2 MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

In addition to works that reference transformation in passing, one finds a number of studies that deal with the subject in depth. We first review those which discuss the phenomenon in ancient Judaism more broadly. After this we turn in §1.3.3 to a review of Pauline scholarship.

#### 1.3.2.1 CHRISTOPHER MORRAY-JONES

In a brief but influential study, Christopher Morray-Jones investigates what he calls ‘transformational mysticism’.<sup>30</sup> The aim of his article is twofold. On the one hand, Morray-Jones is interested in the phenomenon of transformational mysticism in Jewish and Christian mysticism and apocalypticism. Transformational mysticism is an expression of mysticism at whose core is the idea that a human can undergo various changes upon encountering the divine.<sup>31</sup> Such changes might include staking a share in God’s glory;<sup>32</sup> taking possession of the divine name or power;<sup>33</sup> being clothed with divine or angelic clothing;<sup>34</sup> and/or participating in the celestial worship.<sup>35</sup> Morray-Jones points to Enoch-Metatron in *3 En.* 12–15 as an account in which all of these changes can be found.

On the other hand, Morray-Jones is not interested in transformational mysticism alone. Rather, he argues that by studying

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition’, *JJS* 43 (Spring 1992): 1–31; cf. Gilles Quispel, ‘Transformation Through Vision in Jewish Gnosticism and the Cologne Mani Codex’, *VC* 49 (May 1995): 189–91.

<sup>31</sup> Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 1–11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18; cf. Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: JTSA, 2d ed., 1965), 60; Ira Chernus, ‘Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism’, *JSJ* 13 (1982): 123–46.

<sup>33</sup> Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 3–15, 19–28, 30.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–14, 22–3, 27–8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

transformational mysticism we can find evidence of a link between early non-rabbinic mysticism and apocalypticism and later rabbinic and Hekhalot mysticism.<sup>36</sup> He thus explores the particular question of transformational mysticism in the attempt to answer a broader historical question.

Certainly our study differs from that of Morray-Jones on many levels. His chief concern, for example, is not with ontoanthropology but with questions concerning the antiquity and centrality of mysticism in ancient Judaism. However, like his our study seeks answers to a broad question by exploring a more particular one. We investigate accounts of mystical transformation (particular question) with the aim to find answers to questions about ancient Jewish ontoanthropology (broad question).

#### 1.3.2.2 MARTHA HIMMELFARB

Martha Himmelfarb's book *Ascent to Heaven* is among the more invaluable treatments of mystical transformation to date.<sup>37</sup> Like Morray-Jones, Himmelfarb aims to position transformation near the centre of ancient apocalypticism. She observes that in Graeco-Roman antiquity the ontological and spatial boundaries between human and divine were, as she calls it, 'permeable' and 'not very clear'.<sup>38</sup> Under the right circumstances, humans were thought able to enter heaven and become 'the equals of angels'.<sup>39</sup> Enoch is a prime example of one Himmelfarb believes has 'become an angel'.<sup>40</sup> In her thinking, then, the boundaries between human and divine are not just *permeable*. They are *dissolvable*.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 10–11.

<sup>37</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: OUP, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1–8, 47–8, 70.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 4, cf. 29–46, 47–71.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 40.

Himmelfarb's analysis raises two critical issues to be addressed below. Firstly, she discusses what she calls the 'meaning of transformation'.<sup>41</sup> For her the meaning of transformation is tied to the value the apocalypses place on the human creature. Thus the 'examples of the heroes of the ascent apocalypses teach their readers to live the life of this world with the awareness of the possibility of transcendence'.<sup>42</sup> Humans possess an inherent transcendent potentiality that is realised when they encounter the divine. What Himmelfarb calls the 'possibility of transcendence' we speak of in terms of their ontological potentiality, which will become ever important in the following chapters.

Secondly, Himmelfarb's analysis raises the question, what *can* humans actually become? The transformation of Enoch is a good example of why this question is in need of addressing. In *2 En.* 22.10 Enoch finds himself gloriously transformed. Yet even though he is surrounded by angels, he does not appear unequivocally to have become one of them, as Himmelfarb seems to think. He simply declares that 'there was no observable difference' between himself and the 'glorious ones' around him (*2 En.* 22.10).<sup>43</sup> It must be asked, can or do humans become angels in the sense Himmelfarb claims? Or do they merely become 'like' the angels, such that there is no 'observable' difference, as Enoch claims? The ambiguity of this and other accounts no doubt demands we re-open what some believe to be an otherwise closed case. The algorithm we have created will allow us to deal with such questions as this in as systematic a manner as possible (see §1.5.6).

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 69–71.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>43</sup> English translations of *2 Enoch* are those of F.I. Andersen, '2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch', in *OTP* 1.91–221.

### 1.3.2.3 ROSS SHEPHERD KRAEMER

Ross Shepard Kraemer has put forth a study of transformation in *Joseph and Aseneth*, a work with which we deal in our sixth chapter.<sup>44</sup> One of the important foci of Kraemer's study is the relationship between Aseneth's preparatory activities and subsequent transformation into an angel-like being.<sup>45</sup> Kraemer rightly points out that many overlook the inherently transformative nature of preparing for the mystical experience and instead place emphasis on transformation as it occurs after the DHE.<sup>46</sup>

The process of transformation thus begins even before the human meets the divine. By depriving oneself of one's natural inclinations, a human breaks ties with humanity and unite with the angels. Change *may* therefore begin in the preparatory stages leading up to the DHE, as is the case in *Jos. Asen.* The algorithm thus considers the role of preparation in the overall transformative experience (see §1.5.3).

### 1.3.2.4 EDITH HUMPHREY

Another valuable study of transformation in *Jos. Asen.* is that of Edith Humphrey.<sup>47</sup> Humphrey provides a valuable analysis of the literary structure of *Jos. Asen.*, at the centre of which are chs. 14–17, the apocalyptic section of the work.<sup>48</sup> Here we read of Aseneth's transformation into an angel-like being, which Humphrey sees as the heart of the story and 'the goal towards which the entire drama' is moving from the outset.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ross Shepard Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 110–54.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 115–16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>47</sup> Edith McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and The Shepherd of Hermas* (JSPSup 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 30–56.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Humphrey's approach to her chief question is perhaps the greatest contribution of her study. While she is primarily interested in questions about apocalyptic identity, she seeks answers to these by exploring the motif of transformation.<sup>50</sup> Our approach to the question of ontoanthropology is no different. We too seek to understand this broader subject by studying accounts of mystical transformation. Here again one can see that the motif of mystical transformation leads to a plethora of important questions.

#### 1.3.2.5 WILLEM SMELIK

In an investigation of what he calls 'mystical transformation of the righteous into light', Willem Smelik attempts to show that ancient Jews widely believed in a post-mortem experience of apotheosis or deification.<sup>51</sup> Here Smelik makes two main contributions. The first concerns ancient Jewish-mystical hermeneutics. He finds that while mystic-oriented Jews often based their ideas on biblical texts, they tended to press their interpretations far beyond what we today might regard as the texts' or images' *original meanings*.<sup>52</sup> Astral imagery, for example, was taken to be a portrait of the deified state of the righteous after death rather than of stars in the sky.<sup>53</sup> Our suggestions on the effects of mystical empowerment on Jewish mystical hermeneutics find support from Smelik's investigation (see §1.2.4).

The second contribution Smelik makes is to give considerable attention to the rabbinic movement in discussing mystical transformation.<sup>54</sup> This is important, because other such treatments almost exclusively focus on the apocalyptic, Hekhalot and Qumran

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 25, 150.

<sup>51</sup> Willem Smelik, 'On Mystical Transformation of the Righteous into Light in Judaism', *JSJ* 26.2 (1995): 122–44.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 137–9; cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 50.

<sup>54</sup> Smelik, 'Transformation', 127, 130, 140–1.



literature. Rabbinic literature generally finds little positive attention in this conversation (see §2.1.1). Our investigation gives significant attention to the Rabbis as well. The results of such attention will prove indispensable to our understanding of ancient Judaism.

Bearing in mind the importance of Smelik's study to our own, we should like to caution him on his adopting an overly broad definition of 'mystical transformation'. By his definition, there is no differentiation between a transformation that occurs in the present life and one that occurs at or after death. Yet an experience which is mystical must, in our view, take place in the present life (see §§1.2.2–1.2.3). If it does not, it becomes something *else*—a resurrection, for example—and tells us little about the ontological state of humanity *in the present life*.

#### 1.3.2.6 CHARLES GIESCHEN

In his investigation of angelomorphic Christology in early Christianity, Charles Gieschen squarely asks, 'Could a human be an angel'?<sup>55</sup> He finds that in ancient Judaism and Christianity 'several humans were understood to be, and were depicted as, angels'.<sup>56</sup> Among those who were thought to possess this *angelomorphic potentiality* were patriarchs, priests, kings and apostles.<sup>57</sup> Each of these individuals entered or served in some capacity in the immediate presence of the divine. Moses met God at Sinai,<sup>58</sup> Isaiah encountered God in heaven<sup>59</sup> and Levi and other priests served in the Tabernacle and Temple.<sup>60</sup> Such persons met God directly and thereupon became angels even in this life. Gieschen summarises that many Jews in antiquity believed that some 'humans can be, or become, angelomorphic while still alive on earth . . . before or without death', and they thought the

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<sup>55</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 152.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 169–71.

experience of ‘assumption to heaven, or mystical ascent’ to be ‘the event that leads to an angelic state for the human’. In other words, the belief is that ‘an angelomorphic transformation results from the person coming into the presence of the enthroned God’.<sup>61</sup>

One of the strengths of Gieschen’s treatment is his development of the role of divine proximity in the experience of mystical change.<sup>62</sup> *Where or in whose presence* a person is affects his or her ontological state of being.<sup>63</sup> The element of the DHE naturally holds a central place in our algorithm (see §1.5.2) and in our exploration in general.

A major weakness of Gieschen’s treatment is his choice of ‘angelomorph-’ nomenclature.<sup>64</sup> It has become fashionable in recent years to use this language even though it is a notoriously ambiguous. Because of this ambiguous terminology, we are faced yet again with the question as to *what humans can actually become*. When Gieschen uses the language, he appears to understand the angelomorphic human as one whose ontological state now resembles that of the angels, though we are left somewhat on our own to conclude this with any certainty.<sup>65</sup> As noted already, since the matter has precise relevance to our study, we afford it a place in our algorithm and give it careful attention when necessary (see §1.5.6).

#### 1.3.2.7 CRISPIN FLETCHER-LOUIS

Crispin Fletcher-Louis’ work has become perhaps the most formidable engagement with mystical transformation in ancient Judaism to date. Although his focus is primarily on the DSS, his work pertains to other

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. George J. Brooke, ‘Men and Women as Angels in *Joseph and Aseneth*’, *JSP* 14 (2005): 159–77; Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Gieschen, *Christology*, 27–8, 152–3.

areas of ancient Judaism as well.<sup>66</sup> His *All the Glory of Adam* is particularly like ours in its primary concern: both seek to answer questions about the ontological aspects of ancient Jewish anthropology by investigating the motif of mystical transformation.

Fletcher-Louis contends that Qumran sectarians believed themselves, as God's true people, to be capable of becoming 'angelomorphic' in the present life. Through worship the sect believed they could retrieve that Edenic state of existence lost by Adam at the Fall. As Fletcher-Louis writes, 'Before his fall Adam was ontologically coterminous with God's own Glory. His originally divine humanity is recovered when (the true) Israel worships her god in a pure cult'.<sup>67</sup>

Fletcher-Louis presents two interlocking theses in support of his lead proposition. The first is that the sectarians viewed Israel's long-established 'places' of worship—first Eden, then the Temple—as locations where heaven and earth became a single realm. The Temple, and before it, Eden, were thus thought 'to correspond to, represent, or, in some sense, to be, "heaven and earth" in its totality'.<sup>68</sup> In fact, everything associated with the Temple—both animate and inanimate alike—was thought to have become divine on some level.

Fletcher-Louis' second thesis is then a corollary to his first, namely, that to be in God's presence always leads to ontological change. When humans enter a divine place like the Temple, they actually change in a way that there becomes no distinction between the two. One might summarise Fletcher-Louis' view as something like *location determines existence*. Anyone who enters the Temple undergoes a transformation of the sort that there is no longer a distinction between human and divine. In the Temple, the divine subsumes the human. Hence *all* are divine.

Fletcher-Louis' argument is reliant on his unique understanding of *Qumran temple cosmology*. He claims that in sectarian thought, one finds

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<sup>66</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 476.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 62, italics original.

two different cosmologies: one that is monistic and one that is dualistic. Space *outside* the Temple is marked by a clear distinction between earth and heaven, human and divine, profane and sacred. Thus the cosmology that we find in *non-Temple space* is unequivocally dualistic. *Inside* the Temple, however, this distinction—and with it the dualism—disappears altogether. Unlike any other space in the cosmos, Temple space is a convergence of divine and human realms, whose boundaries disappear so much so that the otherwise separate realms become wholly integrated.<sup>69</sup>

As is well known, the sect viewed the Jerusalem Temple as having lost its privileged role as the site of God's dwelling, while their own community had come to be Temple space in its stead. All that had previously applied to the Temple now applied to the sectarian community, including the monistic Temple cosmology noted above. Since the Qumran sectarians stripped the Jerusalem Temple of its long-held significance, removing that monistic Temple cosmology and reattaching it to themselves as a community, what we are speaking of in terms of a *Temple cosmology* in reality became a *sectarian-temple anthropology*.<sup>70</sup> As the *human* substitute for the Jerusalem Temple, the community believed themselves literally to have become the venue where heaven and earth merged together.

This temple cosmological anthropology is especially key to Fletcher-Louis' reading of the Sabbath Shirot.<sup>71</sup> He seeks to offer what he sees as a corrective to the views of Carol Newsom, a leading authority on the Sabbath Shirot.<sup>72</sup> The question Fletcher-Louis asks is this: do the Sabbath Shirot describe both humans and angels worshipping together, as Newsom and most others would argue? Or do they depict angelomorphic humans alone?<sup>73</sup> Does Shirot posit a dualism in which humans and angels

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 267–79.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>73</sup> Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 59–72.

are said to worship alongside one another but remain separate nevertheless (so Newsom et al.)? Or do they articulate a monism in which humans and angels unite to the point that there is no longer any difference between the two (so Fletcher-Louis)? By applying his monistic cosmology to Shirot, Fletcher-Louis can argue that any apparent reference to angels is a reference to humans who have entered an *angelomorphic* state of existence. Newsom's approach to Shirot allows her, in Fletcher-Louis' estimation, 'to maintain both a spatial and an ontological distinction between humans and angels' that he insists is just not there.<sup>74</sup> He counters Newsom by arguing that this is not the way 'the relationship between sacred space and cosmology is envisaged in the *Songs*'.<sup>75</sup> Rather, the work depicts heaven and earth as having merged together the way they did in the Temple before its defilement, creating a single, divine space, wherein previously separate groups (angels and humans) have become a single, divine/angelic entourage.<sup>76</sup> It is during such worship when 'the boundary between heaven and earth is dissolved and the Qumran community are taken up into the life of that which they worship'.<sup>77</sup>

Fletcher-Louis' thesis is a complexity of many interrelated parts, and scholars have had a difficult time accepting many of his arguments.<sup>78</sup> This is not to say that his arguments are without support altogether. Morray-Jones and Ra'anan Boustan have put forth convincing studies that more or less support Fletcher-Louis' thesis.<sup>79</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that criticism has focused on his reconstruction of Qumran temple

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<sup>74</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, 267.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 476, cf. 273.

<sup>78</sup> Carol Newsom, 'Review of *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis', *DSD* 10 (2003): 431–5; Matthew Goff, 'Review of *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis', *JBL* 122 (Spring 2003): 165–75.

<sup>79</sup> Morray-Jones, 'The Temple Within', in *Paradise Now*, 145–78; Ra'anan S. Boustan, 'Angels in the Architecture: Temple Art and the Poetics of Praise in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*', in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (eds. R.S. Boustan and A.Y. Reed; Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 195–212.

cosmology as monistic rather than dualistic. The major point of contention would appear to be Fletcher-Louis' insistence that all references to angels in Shirot are actually to angelomorphic humans, and that there are no angels in the work at all.

In our own view, Fletcher-Louis would greatly strengthen his case were he to nuance his monistic temple cosmology a bit. Certainly he seems right to see a distinction between *temple cosmology* and *non-temple cosmology*. Traditional dualism fails to explain the blurring of cosmological and ontoanthropological boundaries that takes place in divine spaces like Eden, heaven and the Temple—or in this case the temple-community. But it may be beyond the evidence to say that humans and angels unite in such a way that humans actually become indistinguishable from the angels. As we have already indicated, it will be important to ask just what humans become and whether they always become angels or angelic in the sense that Himmelfarb, Gieschen and Fletcher-Louis have suggested. Our algorithm gives special consideration to this question. Also, as we said in our review of Gieschen, Fletcher-Louis' case might find clearer expression were he to avoid using angelomorph- nomenclature and choose a less ambiguous set of terms.

Furthermore, Fletcher-Louis seems to think that the community enter a permanent angelomorphic state, never to return to *normal* human existence. If this were true, it becomes rather difficult to explain the tremendous emphasis on ritual purity in sectarian thought. Permanently angelomorphic persons would seem to have little need for such rigorous purification.

### **1.3.3 MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION IN PAUL**

The space we give to our review of Pauline scholarship is disproportionate in the light of the fact that Paul constitutes just one of six varieties of ancient Judaism. However, scholars on Paul have asked

questions which are far too important *not* to give significant consideration to their work. The questions they have raised apply equally well to Paul as well as to the other varieties of ancient Judaism.

#### 1.3.3.1 *PRESENT ETHICO-MORAL CHANGE*

Two camps can be found among Pauline scholars regarding mystical transformation in Paul. The first understands transformation in terms of ethico-moral empowerment. They maintain that believers have undergone change that enables them to live according to a new Christian ethic. Present transformation is purely ethico-moral, not ontological.<sup>80</sup>

##### 1.3.3.1.1 VOLKER RABENS

Volker Rabens has become a spearhead among scholars in this first camp. In his recently published doctoral thesis, he has sought to answer the question, how does the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα) help believers put Paul's new ethic into practice?<sup>81</sup> Rabens aims to disavow the view that the Spirit changes believers in an ontological-material way and to argue instead that it empowers them to live differently.

Rabens' book divides into two parts. In the first, he criticises what he calls the 'infusion-transformation' approach to the Spirit and ethics in Paul.<sup>82</sup> This approach sees ethical change as the result of pneumatic infusion which has effected ontological-material transformation in believers. Rabens maintains that Paul never spoke of present ontological-material change, as did the Stoics, for example. Rather, he only spoke of an experience of pneumatic empowerment by which believers are enabled to live according to a new ethic. Ontological transformation will not come

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<sup>80</sup> We should refer the reader to Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (WUNT 2.283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), whose review of scholarship is remarkable.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 25–120.

until the resurrection (1 Cor 15), when believers will receive their so-called pneumatic bodies.

In the second part of his book, Rabens proposes what he calls a new 'relational approach' to the Spirit and ethics in Paul.<sup>83</sup> Rather than viewing Paul against a Stoic backdrop, Rabens insists he be seen against one of Second Temple Judaism more broadly.<sup>84</sup> He argues that the Spirit in ancient Judaism was not seen as a *material* as in Stoicism but as a manifestation of God's power. Among the more important roles of the Spirit in Jewish thought is to bring humankind into the divine presence. This Jewish view of the Spirit more accurately aligns with that of Paul than does the Stoic view.

Rabens insists that this view of the Spirit motivates Paul's comments in 2 Cor 3.18 and Rom 8.12–17.<sup>85</sup> According to 2 Cor 3.18, Rabens observes, 'the Spirit transforms people in order to facilitate religious-ethical life',<sup>86</sup> effecting a change in them that is 'particularly visible in their Christ-like behaviour'.<sup>87</sup> Rabens then remarks on the meaning of being changed into the image of Christ, as Paul describes in Rom 8.12–17. By this is meant that the lives of believers 'portray more of the characteristics of Christ'.<sup>88</sup> In each case, ethical change, not ontological change, is at the heart of Paul's message.<sup>89</sup>

The value of Rabens' investigation must not be missed. It is both extensive in its scope and careful in its exegesis of the various Pauline texts in question. Even still, we might caution Rabens on three points. First, his disavowal of what he calls the 'infusion-transformation' approach to the Spirit in Paul is based on an equation of adjectives that is not fundamentally correct. He speaks of *ontological* as if it were interchangeable with *material*. He expends a great deal of effort trying to

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 123–242.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 146–70.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 171–242.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 202–3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 203–42.



confute the idea that Paul viewed the Spirit as a material. From here he then concludes that since the Spirit is not a material, the change that takes place in believers is not ontological. In his mind, then, an ontological transformation is by default a material one, and vice versa.

The problem with this equivalence of adjectives is simple: an *ontological* transformation is not necessarily a *material* one. A material transformation is certainly one type of ontological transformation. But it is not the only type.<sup>90</sup> It seems necessary that we be somewhat clearer when we are speaking of a material ontological transformation and when we are speaking of a non-material ontological transformation.

Second, Rabens' so-called 'relational approach' rightly recognises that the indwelling of the Spirit ushers believers into an intimate relationship with God. The problem is that while he is aware of the ontological implications of being in close proximity to God, he understates the significance of this for the believer's *present ontological state of being*. As we plan to prove in the following, Jews believed that ontological change always occurs when a human enters God's presence. This is not to say that the change is always the same, but only that it is present on some level. One of the things our study will do is to provide a way of speaking about mystical change that distinguishes between the various types of ontological transformative experiences.

Third, it is somewhat difficult for us to think that one must take an *either-or* approach to the work of the Spirit in Paul. It seems that Paul can speak of *both* ontological change *and* pneumatic empowerment in the same breath. This seems to be the thrust of Paul's remarks in Phil 3, with which Rabens could benefit from a more detailed engagement.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 54–67.

#### 1.3.3.1.2 MICHAEL GORMAN

Michael Gorman has made considerable progress towards understanding transformation in Paul over the last decade.<sup>91</sup> At the heart of Paul's thought, Gorman maintains, is the motif of participation in Christ.<sup>92</sup> Precisely what he thinks Paul means by this becomes evident when we understand the two terms that lie at the centre of his argument: 'theosis' and 'cruciformity'.

Gorman defines theosis as 'transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform character of God through Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ'.<sup>93</sup> Theosis for Gorman is therefore primarily ethico-moral in nature. It involves participation in the 'character' of God by means of conformation, or the arrangement of one's life to that of Christ. In other words, to be conformed to Christ is to live in such a way that one's 'story' aligns with that of Christ.<sup>94</sup> It is to embody Christ's humility and crucifixion (so Phil 2.5–11) on a daily basis.

Cruciformity, then, is 'the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality of Paul's life and thought, expressed and experienced in every dimension of his being, bringing together the diverse and potentially divergent aspects of that existence'.<sup>95</sup> Cruciformity is therefore also to make Christ's 'master story' as found in Phil 2.6–11 one's own, allowing one's life to take the *form* of Christ's.<sup>96</sup> In other words, Gorman has made the case that present Christian transformation is ethico-moral, and

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<sup>91</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); idem, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009);

<sup>92</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 3

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 7, 125, 162.

<sup>94</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 4, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 371, *italics original*.

<sup>96</sup> Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 9–39.

ontological change, which he calls ‘eschatological transformation’, will not come until the resurrection.<sup>97</sup>

While Gorman is correct that Paul presents the Christ story as something believers are to emulate, he underestimates the ontological nature of participation in Christ. His view fails to account for the critical ontological nature of being in Christ and having possession of the Spirit. By engaging with Phil 3 and other Pauline texts, we seek to show that Gorman’s thesis is hardly incompatible with ours. The two strengthen one another.

#### 1.3.3.1.3 M. DAVID LITWA

M. David Litwa’s recent monograph *We Are Being Transformed* is yet another important publication on transformation in Paul.<sup>98</sup> Litwa is primarily concerned to show that deification is in Pauline thought. For him, deification takes the form of assimilation to Christ and culminates in the believer’s elevation to godhood.

Litwa insists that Paul is best understood against *both* Graeco-Roman *and* Jewish backdrops.<sup>99</sup> Central to the experience of deification and attainment of godhood in each milieu are notions of immortality and power.<sup>100</sup> Since Paul apparently draws from his contemporaries, he too holds that believers are capable of becoming deified, a process they enter upon entry into Christ. According to Litwa, however, Paul does not think of present transformation as ontological but as ethico-moral. Assimilation to Christ in this life is thus about a change in the way believers live (2 Cor 3.18), not about a change in their state of being (e.g. 1 Cor 15).<sup>101</sup> In fact, Litwa argues elsewhere that deification or theosis in

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 166–7.

<sup>98</sup> M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (BZWK 187; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 37–116.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 37–57, 109–15.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Paul is neither an ‘ontological state’ nor a ‘mystical one’ but instead ‘a mode of being that is manifested in concrete ethical acts’.<sup>102</sup> Ontological change will not come about until the resurrection (1 Cor 15.44–52). At that time, having been elevated to godhood, believers will become immortal and receive power over the world and the angels (1 Cor 3.21; 6.2–3; Rom 8.32; 16.20).<sup>103</sup>

Like Rabens and Gorman, Litwa understates the ontological impact of possessing the Spirit. No doubt he is correct that there is a strong ethico-moral element inherent in being assimilated to Christ. However, while his thesis rests mainly on 1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 3–5, he virtually ignores Phil 3. As stated already, our fifth chapter will seek to bring the latter passage into conversation with the former.

#### 1.3.3.1.4 BEN BLACKWELL

In his recently published *Christosis*, Ben Blackwell seeks to understand whether the concept of *theosis* helps us to understand Paul’s soteriology.<sup>104</sup> His interest is primarily in the anthropological dimension of this doctrine.<sup>105</sup> In exploring the matter, Blackwell holds Paul in conversation with the patristic interpreters Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria, who were known to have looked to Paul for support for their own views on deification. Irenaeus and Cyril conceived of believers in terms of ‘gods’. Psalm 82 supported such thinking.<sup>106</sup> But they looked to Paul’s writings in order to clarify further just what it meant that believers were gods. They thought, in particular, that texts in which Paul speaks of immortality, the image of God and divine sonship were especially

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<sup>102</sup> M. David Litwa, ‘2 Corinthians 3:18 and its Implications for Theosis’, *JTI* 2 (2008): 117–33 [129].

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 152–90.

<sup>104</sup> Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (WUNT 2.314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–66, 83–6.

insightful. Key to this patristic conception of deification was the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

After establishing the patristic view on deification, Blackwell turns to an investigation of those texts which Irenaeus and Cyril had relied upon in their own formulations. These include such texts Rom 8 and 2 Cor 3–5, along with ancillary excurses on Gal 3–4, 1 Cor 15 and Phil 2–3.<sup>107</sup> For Paul, Christ and the Spirit served to bring humankind back into a right relationship with God. This relationship entails not only a return to immortality and glory at the resurrection. It also entails the participation in the Christ narrative even now in the present life.<sup>108</sup>

Blackwell rightly observes that Paul describes believers as having taken a heavenly state of existence, linking this state to that of glory found elsewhere in Paul's letters.<sup>109</sup> He also speaks of the present Christian experience in terms of the embodiment of the life of God that takes place by means of a 'participatory relationship with Christ and the Spirit'.<sup>110</sup> But then he goes on to summarise such Pauline concepts as if it were yet to occur—in future terms, not present. In summarising his discussion of Phil 2–3 as it compares with Rom 8 and 2 Cor 3–5, Blackwell writes, 'While believers suffer presently, their bodies will be transformed into heavenly bodies of glory in the future. During the present time, they are to strive towards maturity by the agency of God as they "work out their salvation"'.<sup>111</sup> He does not seem to think that, in Paul, present transformation has much to do with ontological changes in believers, but that such changes must await the resurrection.<sup>112</sup> At the present, the Spirit has ushered believers into close relationship with God.<sup>113</sup> There they receive life and the empowerment to obey and please God.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 115–238.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 237, cf. 201.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 129–32.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 145.

Blackwell has put forth a rather remarkable piece of research. His holding Paul alongside Irenaeus and Cyril sheds tremendous light on questions surrounding Pauline soteriology and deification in Paul's thought. Our own project follows the general approach that Blackwell has adopted. Rather than to hold Paul in conversation with Church Fathers, however, we place him in the context of ancient Judaism. Unfortunately, like others above, Blackwell relegates truly ontological change in Paul to the future resurrection. He speaks all-too-vaguely about the way believers have been or are being changed in the here and now. And although he treats Phil 3, making valuable points on the role of suffering in the chapter, he does not pick up on the rich transformative nature of the Christian experience portrayed therein.

#### 1.3.3.1.5 STEPHEN FINLAN

Stephen Finlan has published an essay in which he takes something of a medial position between the two camps of Pauline scholars being reviewed in this section.<sup>115</sup> For him, present transformation is *both* ethical *and* ontological. Certainly believers must await the resurrection to experience final transformation into pneumatic beings.<sup>116</sup> But Paul still holds the view that those who are in Christ and who possess the Spirit are in the process of being changed ontologically *and* ethico-morally even now. Finlan labels this Pauline doctrine 'theosis'. Theosis is thus the participation in recovering the lost 'image' of Christ, God's Son (Rom 8.29; 2 Cor 3.18), beginning now and culminating at the resurrection.

Importantly Finlan gives much needed attention to Phil 3. In doing so, he focuses chiefly on two terms key to Paul's message in the chapter. In v. 10 Paul uses the term 'conformation' (συνμορφίζω) to describe what

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<sup>115</sup> Stephen Finlan, 'Can We Speak of *Theosis* in Paul?' in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (eds. M.J. Christensen and J.A. Wittung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 68–80.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

is taking place in/upon believers *in the present life*. In v. 21 he then employs the term ‘transformation’ (μετασχηματίζω) in reference to what will happen to believers *in the future* at the resurrection. Finlan holds that there is a patent distinction between the experience each term conveys.

The first—conformation—is the ‘reorientation’ of one’s life ‘from fleshly living to spiritual living’ (cf. Rom 8.29).<sup>117</sup> This experience has to do with reshaping one’s ‘character, loyalty, and spiritual fruits’ to align with those of Christ.<sup>118</sup> Conformation is therefore the present experience of taking on the ethico-moral qualities that marked Christ’s earthly life.

The latter—transformation—refers then to the believer’s ‘transformed body modeled on [σύμμορφον] Christ’s body’.<sup>119</sup> This is a markedly ontological experience. It has to do with the total-body reconfiguration that will occur at the resurrection, at which time Christ shall remake the physical bodies of believers into ‘entirely different *levels and kinds of life force, nativity, and substance*’.<sup>120</sup> Finlan does not think Phil 3 has anything to say about ontological change taking place in believers in the present life. What they are experiencing right now is ethico-moral, though at the resurrection they will undergo change which is unquestionably ontological.

Whereas Finlan does not find present ontological change in Phil 3, he does find it in 2 Cor 3.18.<sup>121</sup> He understands this verse to be a clear case of what he calls ‘Christification’, or becoming ‘Christlike in substance and character’.<sup>122</sup> Finlan thus argues that believers are undergoing both ethico-moral ‘conformation’ and ontological ‘transformation’ even now (2 Cor 3.18; Phil 3.10), and they shall undergo the latter in full at the resurrection (1 Cor 15.35–54; Phil 3.21).

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 69, italics original.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 75–7.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 79.

By defining theosis—or Christification—as a change in character *and* substance, Finlan moves the discussion in the right direction. Unfortunately, his reading of Phil 3 is not entirely convincing. In particular, the rigid dichotomy he makes between συμμορφίζω ('conformation') and μετασχηματίζω ('transformation') is a dichotomy that Paul never intended. The context of Phil 3.10, 21 makes it difficult to say that present conformation is purely ethical but future transformation ontological. The inherent ambivalence in this family of terms as well as the exegetical difficulty of Phil 3 on the whole makes such a dichotomy hard to accept. And the fact that σύμμορφον appears also in v. 21 in reference to ontological change makes Finlan's argument that συμμορφίζω refers to a purely ethical change even more difficult to accept. Were he to view these terms within the broader context of Phil 3.1–21 rather than dealing with vv. 10 and 21 in exclusion, his case would be greatly strengthened.

#### 1.3.3.2 PRESENT ONTOLOGICAL CHANGE—EARLY VIEWS

The second camp of scholars sees present transformation in Paul not just as empowerment but as profoundly ontological. Before going dormant around the middle of the twentieth century, this view was quite fashionable among Pauline scholars. It has since seen a renewal of interest in recent decades. Let us briefly review the more influential scholars in this camp, reserving critical comments on their views until §1.3.3.4.

##### 1.3.3.2.1 HERMANN LÜDEMANN

Hermann Lüdemann was among the first modern scholars to try to understand the relationship between 'flesh' and 'spirit' in Paul.<sup>123</sup> He

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<sup>123</sup> Hermann Lüdemann, *Die Anthropologie des Apostels Paulus und ihre Stellung innerhalb seiner Heilslehre: nach den vier Hauptbriefen* (Kiel: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1872), 19–150.



argued that Paul drew from Hellenism in formulating his conceptions of flesh and spirit.<sup>124</sup> For Paul, as for his Hellenistic contemporaries, the flesh is the seat of sin.<sup>125</sup> Because flesh is a type of material, the Spirit must also be a material—literally a πνεῦμα-*Stoff*—in order to be able to overcome the flesh.<sup>126</sup> Lüdemann viewed the Spirit as a material entity which comes to inhabit believers at baptism, at which moment the material reversal of Adam's Fall begins to take effect.

#### 1.3.3.2.2 WILHELM HEITMÜLLER

Wilhelm Heitmüller also held a material view of the Spirit.<sup>127</sup> He regarded the Spirit as an 'übernatürliche göttliche Kraft' and 'substantiell' property.<sup>128</sup> And like Lüdemann, he argued that while Paul believes the Spirit to enter humans at baptism, its presence is sustained through the ingestion of the *material* Eucharist.<sup>129</sup> This Spirit-*Substanz* unites believers with Christ whereupon they partake of his death and

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 24–335; Richard Kabisch, *Die Eschatologie des Paulus in ihren Zusammenhängen mit dem Gesamtbegriff des Paulinismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1893), 1–70; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 19–21; L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSup 78; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 42–4. Contra Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: A & C Black, 1912), 58–64; idem, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. W. Montgomery; New York: Crossroad, 1931), 26–40.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Otto Pfleiderer, *Das Urchristentum, seine Schriften und Lehren, Band 1* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 2d ed., 1902), 24–335; idem, *Lectures on the Influence of the Apostle Paul on the Development of Christianity* (HL 1885; London: Williams & Norgate, 1885), 80–1, 160; Heinrich J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie* (SL 2; Freiburg im Breisgau und Leipzig: Mohr Siebeck, 1897); 9–22, 75–81, 154–91.

<sup>126</sup> See Ernst Käsemann's statement: 'Und zwar ist diese Kraft . . . stofflich und substanzhaft gedacht' (*Leib und Leib Christi: eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933], 125).

<sup>127</sup> Wilhelm Heitmüller, *Taufe und Abendmahl bei Paulus: Darstellung und religionsgeschichtliche Beleuchtung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), 19–21; idem, *Taufe und Abendmahl im Urchristentum: Darstellung und religionsgeschichtliche Beleuchtung* (RVG 1.22/23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1911), 25–6.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>129</sup> Heitmüller, *Paulus*, 19–20.

resurrection in reality ('Realität') and undergo a 'physisch-hyperphysisch' transformation in the present life.<sup>130</sup>

#### 1.3.3.2.3 ADOLF DEISSMANN

Adolf Deissmann is perhaps best known for his investigation of the notoriously difficult Pauline expression 'in Christ Jesus' (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).<sup>131</sup> Yet his contribution to scholarly understanding of transformation in Paul is of utmost significance. Indeed, what he makes of transformation in Paul relates directly to what he believes the meaning of being 'in Christ' to be.

In essence, Deissmann argued that the risen Christ 'in' whom believers reside is the same *being* as the Spirit. He thus spoke of Paul's Christ in terms of the 'pneumatischen lebendigen Christus'.<sup>132</sup> To be 'in Christ' is therefore the same as being 'in the Spirit' and, incidentally, to have 'Christ in me'.<sup>133</sup> This is *not* to be united to the *person* of Christ but to participate in an atmospheric Christ who enters humans like the air humans breathe.<sup>134</sup>

While Deissmann rejected a view of Christ as a fully material being, he did believe it to have quasi-material properties, much like air. He thought of the corresponding change taking place inside believers in

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 20; cf. Schweitzer, *Interpreters*, 165; Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC 38; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 94.

<sup>131</sup> Adolf Deissmann, *Die neutestamentliche Formel 'in Christo Jesu'* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1892), 91–2; cf. idem, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (trans. L.R.M. Strachan; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 127–8.

<sup>132</sup> Deissmann, *in Christo Jesu*, 88, 91. Cf. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 167.

<sup>133</sup> Deissmann, *in Christo Jesu*, 88; idem, *St. Paul*, 127–8. Cf. John A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, rev. ed., 1990), 63; Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. J.E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970 [1965]), 160–3. But see Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of Selected Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background* (Roma: EPIB, 2001), 24.

<sup>134</sup> Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 127–8; idem, *in Christo Jesu*, 88. On this atmospheric view of Christ, see also Johannes Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity, Volume 2* (ed. and trans. F.C. Grant; New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937), 465; Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 63; Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus* (trans. D.E. Green; London: SCM, 1971), 107.

quasi-material terms.<sup>135</sup> For Christ possesses a 'light, ethereal form of existence', just as does God himself, and interpenetrates believers in a way that he effects an ontological transformation in them even now.<sup>136</sup>

The effects of Deissmann's work on 'in Christ' in Paul can still be felt today. In a recent work on the corporate elements of Pauline anthropology, Sang-Won (Aaron) Son follows Deissmann in arguing that incorporation in Christ, according to Paul, is hardly to be understood 'purely metaphorical[ly]'.<sup>137</sup> It is a real experience of union between believers and Christ.<sup>138</sup> As Son explains, '[T]he believer's "participation in" Christ's death and resurrection . . . results in "incorporation into" and "existence in" the corporate Christ'.<sup>139</sup> Paul's 'in Christ' formula will become a key element in our discussion of Phil 3 below.

#### 1.3.3.2.4 ERNST KÄSEMANN

Like Lüdemann, Heitmüller and Deissmann, Ernst Käsemann also viewed Christ in terms of a *Stoff*.<sup>140</sup> In contrast to Deissmann, however, Käsemann held that the key to transformation in Paul lies in his

<sup>135</sup> Deissmann, *in Christo Jesu*, 91.

<sup>136</sup> Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 129.

<sup>137</sup> Son, *Elements*, 26–7; cf. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 13, 15; C.F.D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), 53–4, 62; Günther Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (München: C. Kaiser, 1952), 37; Rudolf K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament, Volume 1* (trans. K. Grobel; New York: Scribner, 1951), 140; Martin Dibelius, *Paul* (ed. W.G. Kümmel; trans. F. Clark; London: Longmans, 1953), 93; Johannes Leipoldt, *Die Urchristliche Taufe im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1928), 62; Hans Lietzmann, *Einführung in die Testgeschichte der Paulusbriefe: An die Römer* (HNT 8; Tübingen: Mohr, 3d ed., 1928), 67; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: YUP, 1995), 131; David E. Aune, 'Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology of 2 Cor 4:16–5:10', in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: WJK, 2001), 215–39 [216]. Contra A.J.M. Wedderburn, 'Some Observations on Paul's Use of the Phrases "in Christ" and "with Christ"', *JSNT* 25 (Oct 1985): 83–97; David Konstan and Ilaria Ramelli, 'The Syntax of ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thessalonians 4:16', *JBL* 126 (2007): 579–93.

<sup>138</sup> Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation Through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology* (CBET 29; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 70–1; Morna D. Hooker, 'Interchange in Christ', *JTS* 22 (Oct 1971): 349–61; Rollin A. Ramsaran, '"In Christ" and "Christ in" as Expressions of Religious Experience: Testing the Waters in Galatians', in *Experientia, Volume 2*, 161–81.

<sup>139</sup> Son, *Elements*, 30.

<sup>140</sup> Käsemann, *Leib*, 125–8, 161–2; idem, 'The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper', in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SBT 41; London: SCM, 1964), 108–35 [113–16].

conception of the Spirit.<sup>141</sup> He argued that through baptism and the Eucharistic elements, Christ enters and transforms believers ontologically.<sup>142</sup> In this new state, they unite mystically with other believers and become changed *almost* to the point of losing their individuality.<sup>143</sup> They experience an ontological change such that they come to share in the divine *Substanz*.<sup>144</sup>

#### 1.3.3.2.5 ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Albert Schweitzer has made the most momentous contribution to our understanding of transformation in Paul.<sup>145</sup> Schweitzer's articulation of Paul rested not on his ideas on the Spirit but on what he referred to as Paul's 'Christ-mysticism'.<sup>146</sup> The Spirit remained important, but only as it related to being 'in Christ', which is unequivocally the key to Pauline theology.

For Schweitzer, to be 'in Christ' is to share in Christ's being *realistically* and *physically*. He speaks of this in terms of Paul's 'mystical doctrine of physical union with Christ', which is reminiscent of what Lucien Cerfaux has called 'ontological mysticism'.<sup>147</sup> Rejecting the idea that the union between is purely 'symbolical' or 'ethical', Schweitzer believed the experience to be an 'actual entity' based on a reciprocity of

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<sup>141</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM, 1971), 116; idem, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 134.

<sup>142</sup> Käsemann, *Leib*, 117–19, 126; cf. idem, 'Zur paulinischen Anthropologie', in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 9–60.

<sup>143</sup> Käsemann, *Leib*, 126–7; contra Son, *Elements*, 26–7.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Rabens, *Spirit*, 5–10; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 128–35.

<sup>145</sup> But see Dunn, *Theology*, 392–3.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Johannes Schneider, *Die Passionsmystik des Paulus: ihr Wesen, ihr Hintergrund und ihr Nachwirkungen* (UNT 15; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929); James Stewart, *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935).

<sup>147</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 127; Lucien Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (London: Herder & Herder, 1959), 203; cf. Schweitzer, *Interpreters*, 30; Hans Windisch, *Paulus und Christus: Ein biblisch-religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (UNT 24; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1934), 230; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 122.

‘existence’, ‘corporeity’ and ‘physical[ity]’.<sup>148</sup> Thus the ‘reciprocity of relations’ between Christ and believers ‘is founded on the fact that the existences in question are physically interdependent in the same corporeity, and the one can pass over into the other’.<sup>149</sup> ‘Being in Christ’ is wholly physical, for ‘it corresponds to and, as a state of existence, takes the place of the physical “being in the flesh”’.<sup>150</sup> And by physical (*naturhaft*) Schweitzer meant that the entire human being, both body and soul have been removed from their ‘natural state of existence and transferred into the supernatural’.<sup>151</sup>

One of the more pertinent corollaries to being in Christ is the way suffering affects believers differently than it does non-believers. Schweitzer held that for Paul what happened to Christ happens also to those *in* him.<sup>152</sup> The same way that Christ’s suffering and death led to his exaltation and transformation, so now the suffering of believers leads to their transformation. As Schweitzer explains:

The dying which the believer experiences with Christ is made manifest in suffering which destroys, or tends to destroy, his life. The resurrection state which is in process of formation is manifested by the presence of the Spirit as a supernatural life-principle. The diminution of the natural life and the expression of supernatural life in the natural are, for the knowledge which can look into the depths of things, indications of the displacement of the natural state by the supernatural which is in progress in the believer.<sup>153</sup>

Participation in Christ is the physical participation in the redemption of the cosmos.<sup>154</sup> Participation is as much about cosmology as it is about anthropology. Although the universe is breaking down, those in Christ have already entered a resurrection state of existence.

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<sup>148</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 127.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Schweitzer, *Interpreters*, 162 n. 3; *idem*, *Mysticism*, 167.

<sup>152</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 101, 141; cf. Windisch, *Paulus und Christus*, 230–5.

<sup>153</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 141.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 1.3.3.2.6 PETER STUHLMACHER

Pressing a point that was also important to Schweitzer, Peter Stuhlmacher has argued that for Paul the ‘new creation’ is more about anthropology than about cosmology, having to do with the new state of existence of believers.<sup>155</sup> Unlike Schweitzer, Stuhlmacher emphasises the role of the Spirit in effecting the experience of new creation. Its outpouring has led to a change in believers such they are in the process of recovering the image of God possessed before the Fall.<sup>156</sup>

Most importantly, Stuhlmacher views the new creation in Paul as a wholly material type of ontological experience. Believers obtain the Spirit through a *material* substance at baptism (water) and retain it through the ingestion of the *material* substances of the Eucharist (bread and wine).<sup>157</sup> Thus because the means of transformation are *material*, Stuhlmacher concludes, the transformation itself must be as well.<sup>158</sup>

#### 1.3.3.3 PRESENT ONTOLOGICAL CHANGE—RECENT VIEWS

The scholars reviewed above brought the view of transformation in Paul as ontological to the fore of Pauline scholarship.<sup>159</sup> They have laid a foundation for our study both of Paul and of ancient Judaism more broadly. What remains is a review of the work of recent scholars who view transformation in Paul similarly.

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<sup>155</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, ‘Erwägungen zum ontologischen Charakter der κοινὴ κτίσις bei Paulus’, *EvT* 27 (1967): 1–35; cf. Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980), 207–11; Gregory P. Fewster, *Creation Language in Romans 8: A Study in Monosemy* (LBS 8; Leiden: Brill, 2013), esp. chs. 6, 8.

<sup>156</sup> Stuhlmacher, ‘Erwägungen’, 1–3; idem, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (FRLANT 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2d. ed, 1966), 218–25.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 19–30; idem, *Gerechtigkeit*, 220–2.

<sup>158</sup> Stuhlmacher, ‘Erwägungen’, 25–30.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Ragnar K. Asting, *Die Heiligkeit im Urchristentum* (FRLANT 29; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930), 214–7; Wilhelm Wrede, ‘Paulus’, in *Das Paulusbild in der neueren deutschen Forschung* (WdF 24; eds. U. Luck and K.H. Rengstorff; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 1–97, esp. 60–1; Rabens, *Spirit*, 4–5.

#### 1.3.3.3.1 FRIEDRICH HORN

Friedrich Horn's *Das Angeld des Geistes* marks a revival of the ontological view of transformation in Paul.<sup>160</sup> Although Horn focuses on the *functions* of the Spirit, he insists that its experience is thoroughly ontological. For when the Spirit inhabits someone, it cannot but effect ontological changes in them.

His argument centres on a comparison of Paul's pneumatology with that of other Palestinian and Hellenistic Jews in his day. Both strands of Judaism conceived of the Spirit in material terms. Yet whereas in Palestinian Judaism the Spirit has to do with empowerment, in Hellenistic Judaism it has become 'die Substanz des neuen Seins'.<sup>161</sup>

For Horn, Paul aligns more closely with the latter than the former. He reasons that a change must be material if one material (the Spirit) comes to inhabit another material (human) by means of yet another material (water, bread and wine).<sup>162</sup> Functionally believers are now *physically* able to live according to the new Christian ethic.<sup>163</sup> The Spirit, by virtue of its ontological effects, empowers believers to live rightly. And even though the experience of the Spirit is *only in part*, after the resurrection believers will receive their pneumatic bodies *in full*.<sup>164</sup>

Horn shows that seeing present change in Paul as ontological is not at all incompatible with seeing it as ethico-moral. This is unfortunately a conclusion some scholars have had trouble accepting. Such a dichotomy

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<sup>160</sup> Friedrich W. Horn, *Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur paulinischen Pneumatologie* (FRLANT 154; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992); cf. idem, 'Holy Spirit', in *ABD* 3.260–80; idem, 'Der Verzicht auf die Beschneidung im frühen Christentum', *NTS* 42 (1996): 479–505.

<sup>161</sup> Horn, *Das Angeld*, 40–8, 54–60, 175; idem, 'Holy Spirit', 268–9.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–51, 268–9, 400, 430; idem, 'Holy Spirit', 272–3; cf. Käsemann, *Leib*, 125; idem, 'Das Abendmahl im Neuen Testament', in *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft?* (BET 3; ed. H. Asmussen et al.; München: Kaiser, 1937), 60–93 [89–90]; idem, 'Doctrine', 113.

<sup>163</sup> Horn, *Das Angeld*, 388.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 287–90; idem, 'Holy Spirit', 272–3.

is simply unnecessary, a point we believe our study of Phil 3 substantiates.

#### 1.3.3.3.2 GEORGE VAN KOOTEN

George van Kooten has published two impressive books dealing with Paul's cosmology, anthropology and Christology, which he maintains are inseparable from one another.<sup>165</sup> In his *Cosmic Christology*, van Kooten argues that by holding Paul against the backdrop of Stoicism and Middle Platonism, his articulation of the body of Christ and the cosmos as ontologically intertwined become plain. For Paul the risen Christ possesses a cosmic body, so to unite to him is to unite to the cosmos.<sup>166</sup> Van Kooten refers to this Pauline doctrine in terms of 'cosmic Christology' or 'christological cosmology'.<sup>167</sup>

*Paul's Anthropology in Context* is basically a sequel to *Cosmic Christology*. Here van Kooten seeks to understand Paul's anthropology by comparing it in particular to that of Philo.<sup>168</sup> To begin with, he finds in Paul a tripartite understanding of the human being, which is a composite of body, soul and spirit.<sup>169</sup> Such an anthropology finds motivation in Paul's understanding of the creation story. In their created state, humans possessed the divine image, on the *inside*, only to lose it at the Fall. Humanity can recover this lost divine image only by way of assimilation to Christ, who is the image of God (Rom 12.1–2; cf. Rom 6–8; 2 Cor 3–4).<sup>170</sup> Transformation is thus directly tied to the recovery of the divine

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<sup>165</sup> George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts* (WUNT 2.171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); idem, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT 2.232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>166</sup> Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 1, 59–109.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>168</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 370–4.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 269–312.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 90–1, 388–92.



image. As van Kooten summarises, ‘the best way to understand metamorphosis in Paul is to regard it as a natural part of Paul’s reflections on the image of God’.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, this doctrine is so important to Paul that van Kooten can declare transformation the ‘climax of Paul’s anthropology’.<sup>172</sup>

Van Kooten’s treatment of Pauline anthropology has come under criticism lately. As Joel Green has noted, for example, in his second volume van Kooten seems more interested in Philo’s anthropology than in that of Paul.<sup>173</sup> Though this may be true, and van Kooten’s discussion of the anthropology of Philo is no doubt the strength of the volume, his treatment of Paul is nevertheless of tremendous value to our study. In particular, the idea that Christ’s body now has a cosmic dimension is of direct relevance to our understanding of Phil 3.20, where Paul describes the believing community’s unique experience of heaven in the present life.

#### 1.3.3.3 TROELS ENGBERG-PEDERSEN

Troels Engberg-Pedersen epitomises the scholarly renewal of interest in the ontological-material view of transformation in Paul.<sup>174</sup> He has been arguing for some time that Paul is best understood in the light of Stoicism. He frames his broader thesis thus:

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>173</sup> Joel B. Green, ‘Review of George H. van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity*’, *RBL* (Jan 2011): 1–4.

<sup>174</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ‘A Stoic Understanding of *Pneuma* in Paul’, in *Philosophy at the Roots of Christianity* (WP 2; eds. T. Engberg-Pedersen and Henrik Tronier; Copenhagen: The Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, 2006), 101–23; idem, ‘Complete and Incomplete Transformation in Paul—a Philosophical Reading of Paul on Body and Spirit’, in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (Ekstasis 1; eds. T.K. Seim and J. Økland; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 123–46; idem, ‘The Material Spirit: Cosmology and Ethics in Paul’, *NTS* 55 (2009): 179–97; idem, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2010). And see his more general earlier work, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

Paul's world-view, which is certainly a Jewish 'apocalyptic' one, can be more fully understood when one sees that parts of it were also spelled out by Paul in terms of Greco-Roman philosophical cosmology, in particular that of Stoicism.<sup>175</sup>

The specific 'part' of Paul's 'world-view' on which Engberg-Pedersen has recently focused is what he calls 'bodiliness'—or Paul's 'somatology'—by which he means that aspect of Pauline thought focused on the believer's body.<sup>176</sup> All of this, he maintains, is rooted firmly in Stoicism.

As others have done, Engberg-Pedersen insists that since Paul relied on Stoicism to quantify his own doctrines, and since Stoics considered the Spirit one of the various materials comprising the cosmos, so also Paul thought of it the same way.<sup>177</sup> When the Spirit infuses believers, it therefore effects a change in them that is absolutely material.<sup>178</sup>

Engberg-Pedersen bases his reading of Paul on 1 Cor 15, where Paul remarks on the πνευματικὸν σῶμα ('pneumatic body', cf. Rom 7–8; 2 Cor 4–5; Gal 2–4; Phil 3).<sup>179</sup> He understands Paul to be saying that the Spirit has ushered believers into a process of ontological change in which they are now shedding their old and inferior physicality and taking on a new, superior one. This new pneumatic materiality is a heavenly one, just as is that of the sun, moon and stars.<sup>180</sup> All of this is a firmly Stoic way of thinking, as Engberg-Pedersen explains:

Paul had the idea that the future transformation at the resurrection that would turn the mortal body of flesh and blood into an equally physical, but immortal body of pneuma was already solidly and concretely under way in the bodies of believers, who in connection with faith and baptism had received the pneuma from God.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, vii, 3, 6, 102; idem, 'Material Spirit', 182–4.

<sup>176</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 3.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 55; idem, 'Material Spirit', 179–97.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888).

<sup>179</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 41–6.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 147–57; cf. Litwa, *Transformed*, 148.

<sup>181</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, 'Material Spirit', 188.

Engberg-Pedersen's chief contention can be summarised as follows: what believers shall experience *in full* at the resurrection, they are experiencing *in part*, by virtue of their possession of the Spirit, already in the present life. This experience is such that believers are being changed from one physical state of being to a wholly other one.

Engberg-Pedersen has drawn the critical attention of a number of scholars.<sup>182</sup> John Barclay, for example, observes that in comparing Paul with Stoicism, Engberg-Pedersen ignores many critical contrasts. Barclay takes issue with what Engberg-Pedersen claims the bodies of believers are becoming. Engberg-Pedersen insists they are changing into a material which is hierarchically greater than that of which they were made before, but still one which is recognisable in the created order. Barclay argues, however, that believers are not being changed into the material of the stars, for example, but instead into something entirely new, unlike anything in creation.<sup>183</sup> As he articulates:

The Christ-event constitutes for Paul not the transfer of ready-made material from the 'upper' reaches of the cosmos down to the earthly realm, pre-empting for believers the final absorption of all things into the higher cosmic element, *pneuma*, but the introduction into the cosmos of an unprecedented, newly created phenomenon, never before witnessed within the created order, an eschatological entity which is undecaying and powerful in a way that cannot be predicated of any part of the presently constituted cosmos. The 'life-giving *pneuma*' which characterizes the 'last Adam' (1 Cor. 15.45) is the life of the resurrection (15.20-22), which is not the relocation of creational elements, but the establishment of a wholly new ontological condition.<sup>184</sup>

Barclay argues that for Paul there is nothing in creation equivalent to the new ontological state of those in Christ. Since this idea would be so utterly 'shocking and bizarre' to anyone in Paul's day, it is hard to think

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<sup>182</sup> John M.G. Barclay, 'Stoic Physics and the Christ-event: A Review of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)', *JSNT* 33.4 (2011): 406–14; John R. Levison, 'Paul in the *Stoa Poecile*: A Response to Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford, 2010)', *JSNT* 33.4 (2011): 415–32. And see Engberg-Pedersen's response: 'Paul's Body: A Response to Barclay and Levison', in *NTS* 33.4 (2011): 433–43.

<sup>183</sup> Barclay, 'Physics', 410; Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 28.

<sup>184</sup> Barclay, 'Physics', 411.

that Paul regards believers merely to be *turning into star-like beings*.<sup>185</sup> They are becoming something altogether foreign from the created cosmos.

John Levison offers further critique of Engberg-Pedersen's thesis. For one thing, Paul has drawn from his Hebrew-Jewish heritage in understanding the nature of the Spirit.<sup>186</sup> While Stoics conceived of the Spirit as a fiery, airy substance 'which maintains the tension or cohesion that is necessary to unify the cosmos', Paul never speaks of it in this manner.<sup>187</sup> Schweitzer made this observation a century ago, commenting that in 'the philosophic conception it [the Spirit] is active in the world from all eternity', but in Paul the Spirit 'first appears in the times of the End, and is only bestowed upon a limited section of mankind'.<sup>188</sup> The Spirit is the unique property of believers and something to which others have no access.<sup>189</sup>

Levison makes a further suggestion that seems, in our mind, appropriate. He insists we speak of the Spirit not a material but more in terms of a 'quasi-materiality'.<sup>190</sup> It is something 'with *tonos*—what we might call energy' that serves as the means to transformation.<sup>191</sup> It is not the *substance* into which believers are changing.<sup>192</sup>

Barclay and Levison note that while Stoics speak of the Spirit as a fiery, airy material, Paul never speaks of it this way.<sup>193</sup> He does, however, say that believers are being transformed into δόξα (2 Cor 4.16–18; cf. Phil 3.21), which presumably has a fiery quality. Litwa suggests that Paul may be couching the Stoic conception of the Spirit in language of δόξα drawn

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Levison, 'Stoa', 427–31.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 416, and see his references.

<sup>188</sup> Schweitzer, *Interpreters*, 98.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Deissmann, Weiss, Ziesler and Schweizer (see §1.3.3.2.3).

<sup>190</sup> Levison, 'Stoa', 432.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Barclay, 'Physics', 410 n. 6; Levison, 'Stoa', 416, 420–1.

from Judaism.<sup>194</sup> Both δόξα and πνεῦμα are conceived in terms of a fiery substance.

#### 1.3.3.4 SUMMARY OF SCHOLARSHIP ON PAUL

Pauline scholars have raised many important questions. They have inquired into the role and nature of the Spirit in the present experience of believers, the materiality of the transformation taking place in believers, and even into the *edibility* of God's presence, asking how it is that God can enter or mix with human beings through the Eucharistic elements (see §§1.5.4–1.5.5). These questions will reappear not only in our treatment of Paul, but throughout our explorations of other varieties of ancient Judaism as well.

The difference between our study and those surveyed here is absolutely critical. It lies primarily in methodology. The majority of those above approach transformation by trying to understand the nature of the Spirit. They believe that if it can be proved that the Spirit is either material or immaterial, then it can also be shown that transformation, as effected *by the Spirit*, is either material or immaterial. The key to the nature of the transformation of believers rests in the nature of the Spirit who inhabits them.

Our study approaches the subject from the reverse angle. We look not firstly to the nature of the Spirit or of God but to that of the human creature itself. Ours is therefore not a study in pneumatology per se but, as we have made clear already, an anthropology that is concerned specifically with the ontological state of the human creature. It is only secondarily concerned with that of God, and this only when it pertains to our primary concern.

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<sup>194</sup> Litwa, *Transformed*, 148–9.

## 1.4 TAXONOMY OF THE MYSTICAL-TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

With an overview of the state of research on our subject, we may now explain how we will answer the difficult questions inherent in such matters. Of course, finding answers to our questions will be no easy task, so it is critical that we find a way of arranging our project as simply as possible. Only then, by way of detailed analyses of accounts of mystical transformation, shall we be able to move towards the construction of an ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism.

### 1.4.1 THE TAXONOMIC HIERARCHY

In order to benefit fully from the detailed analyses of the following chapters and to find answers to the broader ontoanthropological questions such analyses raise, we must be able to see how the *parts* and the *whole* relate to one another. To do this, we have arranged our project according to the taxonomic arrangement used in the sciences. The taxonomic arrangement underpinning our project outlines as follows:

Phylum = Ancient Judaism

Class = Ontoanthropology

Order = Ancient Jewish Mysticism

Family = Mystical Transformation

Genus = Four Genera of Mystical-Transformative Experiences

Species = Six Varieties of Ancient Judaism

Our taxonomy progresses from the more general to the more specific. It begins with ancient Judaism (phylum) in general. From here it proceeds into what we are calling ancient Jewish ontoanthropology (class). At the epicentre of our construction lies a detailed investigation of ancient Jewish mysticism (order) with a keen eye towards the motif of mystical

transformation (family). We find, in particular, four *genera* of mystical-transformative experiences (genus). And in an order suitable to the goals and shape of our project, these *genera* divide further into the six varieties of ancient Judaism defined above in §1.2.5 (species). By outlining our project this way, we shall be able to link the seemingly disconnected chapters not only to one another but to the broader ancient Jewish ontoanthropological construct.

#### **1.4.2 GENUS 1—ENTHRONEMENT TRANSFORMATION**

Genus 1 represents the category of mystical change marked by the enthronement and transformation of an individual into an angel-like being. Because so much attention has been given to this genus, and since it is so close in nature to Genus 2, we only discuss it secondarily. Brief discussion of it appears, for example, in our investigation of Hekhalot Zutarti (§2.3.1.3.1–2.3.1.3.3) and of the Dead Sea Scrolls (§4.3.1).

#### **1.4.3 GENUS 2—INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION (PART II)**

Genus 2 represents the category of mystical change involving an individual more generally—without an enthronement at its centre. It can certainly include both genera 1 (enthronement) and 4 (theophagic). We treat it separately from genus 4, however, for reasons to be given below in §1.4.5. Genus 2 will be the subject of Part II (chapters two and three).

##### *1.4.3.1 SPECIES 2A—HEKHALOT-MYSTICAL JUDAISM (CHAPTER 2)*

Chapter two attempts to understand the ontoanthropology of what we shall call Hekhalot-Mystical Judaism. It does so by investigating accounts of transformation in their literature. The mystics represented by the Hekhalot texts were Jews who were contemporary with the Rabbis

known to us from the classical rabbinic texts. These mystics may well have lived alongside the Rabbis.

Our investigation of Hekhalot-Mystical Judaism as a representative of Genus 2 seems justified. Its literature is largely concerned with the individual mystical experience. Certainly the communities involved would likely have benefitted from the experiences of the individuals within their ranks. Nevertheless, when transformation occurs it is more often than not the experience of an individual and not the collective.

HZ is no doubt a propitious example of Genus 2. The work on which we focus in chapter two is called Hekhalot Zutarti (HZ), which will receive a fuller introduction in due course (see §§2.1.1–2.1.3). As something of a guidebook, its language is clearer than many ‘mystical’ works known to us. It plainly charges that humans who follow its instructions will share in a remarkable experience of transformation. The transformation it divulges is truly spectacular, having to do with vision, intellect and an experience of mixture between the mystic and the light properties emanating from God’s face.

#### *1.4.3.2 SPECIES 2B—GREEK-PHILOSOPHICAL JUDAISM (CHAPTER 3)*

Chapter three seeks to understand the ontoanthropology of Philo Judaeus. As is well known, Philo lived in Alexandria, Egypt, around the turn of the Common Era (see §3.1.1). Philo is a clear example of Greek-Philosophical Judaism, or Judaism’s encounter with Greek philosophy.

An investigation of Philo’s writings leads us to ask questions similar to those we raise in chapter two, especially concerning the transformation of the individual. Philo differs from Hekhalot mysticism, however, in that his writings are explicitly philosophical in nature. He engages the Scriptures and scriptural issues using an assortment of philosophies salient in his day.



Philo is an indispensable representative of Genus 2. The specific text on which we focus in our study of Philo is called *De opificio mundi* 144, for more on which see §3.1.3 below. This text supposes that through intensive effort, human beings can encounter God directly, ‘assimilate’ to him in some manner, and ultimately become like him.

#### **1.4.4 GENUS 3—COMMUNAL TRANSFORMATION (PART III)**

Genus 3 represents the category of mystical change involving a community or group of people. Certainly there is always an element of Genus 2 inherent in this category of mystical transformation: for individuals make up communities. The texts we discuss under this category, however, describe transformation as the experience of the group above and beyond that of any single individual. Our primary concern in Part III (chapters four and five) is Genus 3.

##### *1.4.4.1 SPECIES 3A—QUMRAN-SECTARIAN JUDAISM (CHAPTER 4)*

Chapter four examines the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) in the attempt to understand the ontoanthropology of what may be called Qumran-Sectarian Judaism. The DSS represent a ‘sectarian’ variety of Judaism in its homeland (see further below §§4.1.1–4.1.2). Following Bryan Wilson, we understand a ‘sect’ in terms of ‘a religiously separated group’ or ‘movement committed to heretical beliefs and often to ritual acts and practices like isolation that departed from orthodox religious procedures’.<sup>195</sup> Sectarian identity is dependent on whose perspective one takes: that of the ‘sect’ or the ‘orthodox’ establishment from whom the

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<sup>195</sup> Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 89. Cf. Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 13–8, 52–89; Pieter F. Craffert, ‘An Exercise in the Critical Use of Models: The “Goodness of Fit” of Wilson’s Sect Model’, in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (BIS 53; ed. J.J. Pilch; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 21–46.

sect have separated. There is little doubt, however, that Qumran Judaism was sectarian in that it protested key elements in Judaism while, in its own estimation, it remained 'Jewish' through and through.

The Qumran community have left behind a substantial amount of literature. There is debate as to which works in this literature actually belonged to them. When attempting to understand Qumran-Sectarian Judaism, one must determine whether the work in question is truly representative of the thought and practice of the community or whether that work's placement at Qumran was merely coincidental. Obviously, works of a sectarian provenance are considered representative of sectarian thought and practice. Other works deemed non-sectarian in provenance are still considered to be representative of sectarian thought and practice on some level. The community probably re-appropriated such works, which they did not themselves write, for their own use.

The sectarian nature of the works we consider in our fourth chapter is largely indisputable. Our base text is known as *Serekh ha-Yahad*. Interestingly, scholars regard this as the standard for measuring whether *other* works are sectarian or not.

Genus 3 finds conspicuous expression among the Qumran community. Their focus on community permeates every facet of their thought. This is evident not least in the appellation they use to describe themselves—*Yahad* (יהאד)—which literally means 'together'. At their core, they are the assemblage, the gathering, the *together* community. At the heart of the community's self-identity is the experience of transformation. This is particularly apparent in texts such as those we investigate in which they speak of themselves as the site of God's presence and as intermingling with the angels in heaven.

#### 1.4.4.2 SPECIES 3B—CHRISTIAN JUDAISM (CHAPTER 5)

Chapter five turns from the Qumran literature to the letters of Paul, who represents what we are calling Christian Judaism.<sup>196</sup> 'Christian Judaism' refers to that early stratum of Christianity which had not yet lost its embryonic Jewish flavour to the prevailing Graeco-Romanism of the Mediterranean. Our treating Paul as representative of a distinct variety of ancient Judaism finds support from what he says about himself in his letters. He claims, for example, to have been Jewish both by birth and by religious adherence, and even in his letters he continues to speak of himself as a Jew (Rom 11.1; 2 Cor 11.22; Gal 1.13, 23; Phil 3.5).<sup>197</sup> His dramatic encounter with Christ on the Damascus road certainly changed the way he thought of his Jewishness. Before meeting Christ, Paul viewed his Jewish ethnicity and religiosity as key to his relationship with and standing before the God of Israel. After meeting Christ, however, while he never came to speak of himself as *no longer Jewish*, he did come to view his ethnicity and religiosity as having considerably less significance vis-à-vis his relationship with and standing before God than it had before (Rom 4.4, 16; 6.14–15, 1 Cor 1.4; Gal 1.6; 2.21; Phil 3.6–9). Paul's Judaism and understanding of how humankind might relate to God took on radically new significance. Nevertheless, even after undergoing a dramatic reconfiguration in worldview, he never seems to have stopped being a Jew.

We have chosen Paul as a representative of Genus 3 because he, like the Qumran community, is largely concerned with the state of the community to which he belongs. Of especial concern in our study is the mystical-transformative experience he lays out in Phil 3.1–21. His chief

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. Daniel Boyarin, 'Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category', *JQR* 99.1 (Winter 2009): 7–36.

<sup>197</sup> For helpful overviews of Paul as a Jew, see the essays by Klaus Haacker ('Paul's Life') and Alan F. Segal ('Paul's Jewish Presuppositions') in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (ed. J.D.G. Dunn; Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 19–33, 159–72.

concern in this text is with the way he and fellow believers encounter Christ, Spirit and indeed the heavenly realm even now in the present life.

#### **1.4.5 GENUS 4—THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION (PART IV)**

Genus 4 represents the category of mystical change which entails transformation by means of the ingestion of divine *things*. Divine *things* can signify either non-living objects, such as a food-substance that is divine in nature, or the presence of a living being, such as the spirit or some other facet of God. Ingestion, too, can take a number of forms. It can be done via the mouth, as one would expect, or it can be done using other sensory apparatuses, such as the eyes or mind. Part IV (chapters six and seven) explores this category of mystical change.

##### *1.4.5.1 SPECIES 4A—NON-PHILOSOPHICAL DIASPORA JUDAISM (CHAPTER 6)*

Chapter six explores the ontoanthropology of Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism—that broad grouping of Jews living outside of Palestine from the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E. to the present. Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism represents an incredibly vast and complex variety of Judaism. Naturally to find a single work representative of this variety is next to impossible.

The principal text we have chosen to represent Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism is known as *Joseph and Aseneth* (*Jos. Asen.*). *Jos. Asen.* represents a form of non-Rabbinic Jewish writing which circulated in Greek widely. It might also be seen as in many ways encapsulating Diaspora thinking of a certain kind. Indeed, it seems fitting that we select a work that, on the one hand, dates to the Second Temple period (see §6.1.2), and on the other, contains multiple genres common among the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature composed by Diaspora Jews of the period.

*Jos. Asen.* is a representative of Genus 4. One could justifiably treat *Jos. Asen.* as an example of either Genus 2 (individual) or Genus 4 (ingestion). Yet since the mystical change comes through divine ingestion, we shall treat it as a case of the latter genus rather than the former. For even though many things factor into her experience of change, it is Aseneth's eating of the divine food which ultimately leads to her transformation.

#### 1.4.5.2 SPECIES 4B—RABBINIC JUDAISM (CHAPTER 7)

Chapter seven investigates the ontoanthropology of Rabbinic Judaism. What we know as Rabbinic Judaism no doubt represents the predominant variety of Judaism that began just after the destruction of the Temple and extended at least through the sixth century C.E., or perhaps slightly thereafter. The literary deposit from this variety lays the foundation for contemporary Judaism.

The text we explore in this chapter is called *Bavli Soṭah* 49a, which we introduce in §7.1.3. This text contains a remarkable account that links the study of Torah and performance of Tefillah (prayer) to the mystical-transformative ingestion of God's presence. Surely what we find in this text has far-reaching consequences both for our understanding of ancient Judaism on the whole and for our tentative sketch of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. We can reasonably speak of this, our seventh chapter, as the culmination of the main body of the project. The contribution of this variety of ancient Judaism will be unequivocal.

#### 1.4.6 SUMMARY

The taxonomic arrangement of our study will enable us to arrive at a well-rounded formulation of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. By dividing Parts II, III and IV according to the three genera defined above, we shall be able to view mystical transformation from a rather broad perspective.

Our sampling becomes rather large as compared to that of many investigations into the subject. The six species corresponding to chapters two through seven shall then serve as the terrain on which we explore in detail the various texts that speak of mystical transformation. Our Conclusion in Part V will then allow us to sketch out an organic, albeit exploratory and somewhat tentative, ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism.

## **1.5 AN ONTOANTHROPOLOGICAL ALGORITHM**

As already stated, our task will be to reflect on the various genera of mystical-transformative experiences in order to sketch out an ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism. In a great many cases, the mystical-transformative experience and attendant ontoanthropological ideas exist in the texts and even hold a significant place in them, but only *implicitly*. We have yet to come across a text which states overtly, ‘The individual or group in this account is undergoing a mystical transformation, and this is what it tells us about ancient Jewish ontoanthropology’. We have therefore designed an algorithm that will help us to decipher the difficult details of the texts and reconfigure them in a way that leads us towards an understanding of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. Let us briefly discuss the questions and considerations that will factor into our algorithm, placing a signifier on each for identification below.

### **1.5.1 HUMANKIND IN THEIR NATURAL STATE (NS)**

It will be helpful to learn a text’s view of humankind in their natural ontological state. This will assist us in coming to know the nature of their change when the text does not address the matter directly. We should nevertheless be able to learn something about it by looking at certain details alleged to take place during the transformative experience.

### 1.5.2 MODES OF THE DIVINE-HUMAN ENCOUNTER (DHE)

Our definition of the mystical experience requires that there be a direct encounter between human and divine which occurs in the present life (see §1.2.3). Without this, whatever it might be, the experience is not a mystical one.

#### 1.5.2.1 DIVINE ADVANCE (DA)

Three principal modes of the DHE can be found. The first occurs when *the divine advances towards the human*. This can take a number of forms. The most common divine advance occurs when an angelic being enters human space.

#### 1.5.2.2 HUMAN ADVANCE (HA)

The second mode of encounter occurs when *the human advances towards the divine*. By far the most well-known human advance takes the form of an ascent to heaven. Certainly anyone familiar with the ascent apocalypses will see it as perhaps the clearest expression of this mode.

#### 1.5.2.3 MUTUAL ADVANCE (MA)

The third mode of encounter is actually an amalgam of the above two. This occurs when *the divine and human advance towards each other simultaneously*. Such an advance often takes the shape of a mixture between the human being and the divine presence.

### 1.5.3 THE PLIGHT OF AND PREPARATION FOR THE DHE (P<sup>1</sup>/P<sup>2</sup>)

While it is most important for our study to understand what happens during and after the DHE, certain features that occur before may nonetheless be illuminating. Such elements can often give us insight as to *why* the DHE and subsequent transformation are necessary and tell us *how* such experiences are brought about. We refer to these in terms of the plight of and preparation for the DHE.

#### 1.5.3.1 PLIGHT (P<sup>1</sup>)

The text often gives some indication as to why the DHE is necessary or desired. The motif of the fallen creation, for example, undergirds many accounts of transformation. For certain humans are driven by a longing to experience an escape from the dread of life in a fallen world and to undergo something like a re-creation or new creation *even before the Eschaton*. Another patent example of a plight which has long motivated many Jews to seek the DHE would be the defilement and/or destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

#### 1.5.3.2 PREPARATION (P<sup>2</sup>)

A second element that precedes the actual DHE has to do with the activities an individual or a group perform in preparation for the DHE. Such activities reveal what those persons think is necessary to make contact with the divine. And even though preparation is more often than not *outward*, it generally has implications on what the text conceives about the *overall* state of the human being.



#### 1.5.4 ONTOLOGICAL MIXTURE (*Mix*)

In order to understand how two entities—namely, a human and the divine—interact ontologically, we shall employ the concept of *mixture*. Mixture is a vital concept in contemporary science, especially chemistry. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry *Gold Book* defines a *mixture* as a ‘portion of matter consisting of two or more chemical substances called constituents’.<sup>198</sup> In a more philosophical inquiry into the ontology of parts, Peter Simons explains, ‘The term “mixture” is used in everyday life for any object (usually a mass or plurality) consisting of two or more kinds of object such that the particles or members of the kinds are more or less evenly distributed among one another’.<sup>199</sup> Mixture thus designates a number of different processes in which two or more entities make contact with one another and form a single unit. Further, as Simons adds, ‘It is to be expected that a mixture of two or more substances falls under a different noun from either of its constituents. A mixture of black coffee and milk is neither black coffee nor milk’.<sup>200</sup> When two entities mix, they form a new one that is distinct from each of the component parts.

Ancient philosophers understood this long before modern chemists.<sup>201</sup> Stoics were particularly interested in the various ways entities mixed together.<sup>202</sup> Among the more influential ancients to

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<sup>198</sup> IUPAC. Compendium of Chemical Terminology (eds. A.D. McNaught and A. Wilkinson; Oxford: Blackwell Scientific, 2d ed., 2006 [1997]), retrieved from <<http://goldbook.iupac.org>> on 7 Nov 2012.

<sup>199</sup> Peter Simons, *Parts: A Study in Ontology* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 218.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Robert B. Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics: A Study of the De Mixtione with Preliminary Essays, Text, Translation and Commentary* (PA 28; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 21–88. Cf. A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (New York: Scribner, 1974), 159–60; Jaap Mansfeld, ‘Zeno and Aristotle on Mixture’, *Mnemosyne* Fourth Series 36.3/4 (1983): 306–10; Rega Wood and Michael Weisberg, ‘Interpreting Aristotle on Mixture: Problems about Elemental Composition from Philoponus to Cooper’, *SHPS* 35 (2004): 681–706.

<sup>202</sup> John Sellars, *Stoicism* (AP; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 2006), 88–90; Jacob Neusner, ‘Physics in an Odd Idiom: The Stoic Theory of Mixtures in the Applied Reason of the Mishnah’, *BSOAS* 52 (1989): 419–29.

expound the theory of mixture is a philosopher called Chrysippus of Soli. Chrysippus was a Stoic who lived from ca. 280 to ca. 207 B.C.E.<sup>203</sup> He expanded on the work of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, and was greatly influential for centuries to follow.<sup>204</sup> Chrysippus proposes a threefold categorisation of mixture, which we adopt for use in our own study.

#### 1.5.4.1 Juxtaposition (MIX $\Pi$ )

The first category of mixture is called ‘juxtaposition’ (παράθεσις). Juxtaposition occurs when two objects are placed next to one another without actually merging together fully. Each component maintains its own ontological state and can thus be separated easily.<sup>205</sup> Juxtaposition happens when, for example, one places beans and grains of wheat next to each other. The two parts form a mixture but retain their respective ontological states of being.

#### 1.5.4.2 Fusion (MIX $\Sigma$ )

The second category of mixture is called ‘fusion’ (σύγχυσις). Fusion occurs when two entities come together in such a way that the parts undergo a sort of *destruction* only then to undergo *reconstruction* into a new, singular entity.<sup>206</sup> It is impossible to separate the components after they *fuse* together, for ‘they’ as individual parts no longer exist. They are lost in the process of becoming that new entity.

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<sup>203</sup> Josiah B. Gould, *The Philosophy of Chrysippus*, (PA 17; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 7–17; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3d ed., 2003), 355.

<sup>204</sup> Heinrich von Staden, ‘Body, Soul, and Nerves: Epicurus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, the Stoics, and Galen’, in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (eds. J.P. Wright and P. Potter; Oxford: OUP, 2000), 79–116.

<sup>205</sup> Daniel Nolan, ‘Stoic Gunk’, *Phronesis* 51 (2006): 162–83 [169].

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 1.5.4.3 BLENDING (MIX K)

The third type of mixture is called ‘blending’ (κρᾶσις; cf. μίξις).<sup>207</sup>

Blending takes place when separate entities combine to form a single entity, all the while retaining their distinctive properties. In describing the views of Chrysippus, Alexander of Aphrodisias (late-second–early-third c. C.E.) explains that when blending occurs<sup>208</sup>

certain substances and their qualities are mutually extended through and through, with the original substances and their qualities being preserved in such a mixture. For the capacity to be separated again from one another is a peculiarity of blended substances, and this occurs only if they preserve their own natures in the mixture.<sup>209</sup>

This type of mixture is something of a middle path between juxtaposition and fusion.<sup>210</sup> In blending, the component parts mix in such a way that they *appear* to be fused together. Yet upon close inspection one learns that the parts have actually retained their distinctive states of being and can be separated from one another.

#### 1.5.5 CENTRIFUGALITY (CENTRI*F*) AND CENTRIPETALITY (CENTRI*P*)

There is a question that has to do with how easy or difficult it is for mystical transformation to occur. Different texts conceive of the human differently. Etically speaking, an account generally describes the human

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<sup>207</sup> Sambursky, *Physics*, 14–15.

<sup>208</sup> On Alexander, see Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias*, 2–20; Kevin L. Flannery, SJ, *Ways into the Logic of Alexander of Aphrodisias* (PA 62; Leiden: Brill, 1995), xix–xxiv.

<sup>209</sup> Text taken from A.A. Long and David N. Sedley (eds. and trans.), *The Hellenistic Sources, Volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), §48c, quoted in Nolan, ‘Stoic Gunk’, 169.

<sup>210</sup> Sambursky, *Physics*, 122; Simons, *Parts*, 210.

creature as either ‘centrifugal’ or ‘centripetal’, the meaning of which we give below.<sup>211</sup>

#### 1.5.5.1 CENTRIFUGALITY (*CENTRIF*)

On the one hand, ‘centrifugal’ humans are those who undergo ontological change *easily*. Such humans are thought to be ‘relatively loosely organized, with subtle and fairly easy transitions across internal boundaries, and between self and world’.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, the ontological boundaries of such a person are rather permeable such that he or she has the potential to mix not only with the divine being or celestial realm, but also with other members of his or her community.<sup>213</sup> One might think of a centrifugal human as having boundaries that are rather porous and easily penetrable.

#### 1.5.5.2 CENTRIPETALITY (*CENTRIP*)

‘Centripetal’ persons, on the other hand, have a more difficult time experiencing ontological change. Such persons have ontological boundaries ‘which are more strictly delimited and defined and also more starkly set off from the surrounding contexts’.<sup>214</sup> As David Shulman and Guy Stroumsa explain, ‘Centripetal transformation tends to the conflictual, to experiences of dramatic rupture and irreversible movement into a new identity or ontic domain’.<sup>215</sup> When ontological change does happen to centripetal humans, it does not come about easily or painlessly.

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<sup>211</sup> Cf. Moshe Idel, ‘Astral Dreams in Judaism Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries’, in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (eds. D. Shulman and G.G. Stroumsa; Oxford: OUP, 1999), 135–51; cf. idem, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: YUP, 2002), 22; idem, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought* (JCC; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010), 151.

<sup>212</sup> Shulman and Stroumsa, ‘Introduction’, in *Self-Transformation*, 3–16 [13].

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

Centripetal humans must often pass through painstaking trials before coming out on the other side having undergone radical ontological change.<sup>216</sup> In contrast to a centrifugal human, the centripetal human has boundaries which are quite non-porous and extremely impenetrable in their natural state.

### **1.5.6 MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION (MT)**

We defined the mystical transformation above, so we shall not repeat that discussion here (see §1.2.3). What remains is to delineate further between different types of mystical transformation. Motivating our including this factor in our algorithm is the widespread notion that humans always become angels upon experiencing mystical transformation. This is not always the case, and such an assumption needs to be tested in the light of the evidence of the texts.

#### *1.5.6.1 TRUE OR RENEWED HUMAN (TRH)*

In general, we find two types of transformation in the literature. One has to do with the human who, while becoming truly different, *always remains fully human*. This person(s) is changed in such a way that he or she returns to a state of being like that which humanity might or should have possessed in their created state of being. It is, in other words, a transformation marked by ontological renewal. After being changed, the human is certainly different, but he or she is still fully—or *truly*—human.

#### *1.5.6.2 BEYOND HUMAN (BH)*

Another type of transformation is that in which the human changes in a way as to become *more than* human. This person turns into something

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

that, whatever it might be, is no longer merely a human creature. While it is certainly the case that humans sometimes change into a non-human beings—angels, for example—this is only true part of the time. By allotting this component a place in our algorithm, we shall not merely rely on the assumption that it is true, but we shall seek to find support for this view in the texts.

### 1.5.7 AN ONTOANTHROPOLOGICAL ALGORITHM

Based on the above considerations, we can put forth what we are calling an *ontoanthropological algorithm*. In its simple form, it looks as follows:

$$NS + PP + DHE + Mix + Centri = MT \Rightarrow OA$$

Each of the variables signifies a different component which is added (+) to the others. When taken together, the variables equal (=) or amount to the mystical transformation (MT). All of this then leads ( $\Rightarrow$ ) us initially to the ontoanthropology (OA) of each variety, and ultimately to that of ancient Judaism on the whole.

We have only presented the algorithm in its most basic form in order to show that at its core it is a rather *simple* way of approaching the subject, organising our results and quantifying them in a meaningful fashion. When we take into account the sub-components within each variable, our algorithm then appears as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &NS + P^1/P^2 + DHE (=DA|HA|MA) \\ &+ Mix (= \Pi|\Sigma|K) + CentriF |CentriP \\ &= MT (=TRH|BH) \Rightarrow OA \end{aligned}$$

The primary addition to the full algorithm are the bracketed variables DA, HA, MA,  $\Pi$ ,  $\Sigma$ , K, F, P, TRH and BH. These are separated from one another by the ‘or’ (|) symbol, indicating that only one variable can be chosen to

represent the factor to which it is attached. The DHE can thus be represented by either DA, HA or MA; the type of *Mix* by  $\Pi$ ,  $\Sigma$  or K; the class of ontological being as either Centri*F* or Centri*P*; and the MT by either TRH or BH.

We cannot emphasise enough that there are no hard and fast lines separating one factor in our algorithm from another. Much of the difficulty in our project, as with others of its kind, is that there is neither a single nor a simple route for one to follow to produce meaningful results. The algorithm is only one way to assess and quantify the details of the texts, which then form the constituent parts of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. It serves as a set of guidelines that will help us to remain consistent in our evaluations of often diverse and distinctive bodies of literature. We shall supplement the algorithm with reasoned observations on the texts in question. It will not be until chapter eight when we reapply the algorithm to our findings. At that point, we shall be ready to make reasonable conclusions and present a tentative sketch of the ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism.

## **1.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Ideas on human mutability and mystical change are truly invaluable to furthering our knowledge and understanding, not only of Jewish mysticism, but of ancient Judaism more broadly. Our exploration shall therefore show that, by approaching the subject and pertinent texts in a consistent manner, by finding the right language to describe what we find in those texts, and by figuring out the best way to analyse, scrutinise and quantify our results, a subject that has otherwise been swept under the rug of scholarly assumption will re-emerge in fresh light. Preliminary matters behind, we shall now enter the first of six explorations of mystical change, collecting materials along the way to be used in constructing an ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism.

## **PART II**

### **GENUS 2—INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION**



## CHAPTER 2

### TRANSFORMED BY HIS *LICHTSTOFF* DESCENT AND GLORIFICATION IN HEKHALOT ZUTARTI

#### 2.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

The present chapter explores the ontoanthropology of Hekhalot-Mystical Judaism. Hekhalot mysticism is the first (Species 2A) of two representatives of Genus 2 (Individual Transformation). In particular, our interest lies in what happens to those who survive the journey through the heavenly hekhalot (הֵיכָלֹת; sing.: הֵיכָל) and the encounter with God on his celestial throne, or Merkavah (מֵרֻכָּבָה; plur.: מֵרֻכָּבוֹת).

The importance of the Hekhalot movement and their literature is indeed indisputable. Before moving forward, it will be necessary to offer brief introductions to the movement, its literature and the state of scholarship on the movement. After this we shall be in a position to engage critically with the primary text in question.

##### 2.1.1 THE HEKHALOT MOVEMENT AND THEIR LITERATURE

Truly constructive engagement with Jewish mysticism did not come until Gershom Scholem emerged on the scholarly scene prior to the Second World War. Before this the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school dominated the field of Jewish studies, having already established the view that mysticism was incompatible to historic Judaism.

The *Wissenschaft* school sought not merely to provide a history of Judaism.<sup>1</sup> They aimed to afford Judaism an equal place in history with Christianity. Although the school's work remains important today, they were anything but sympathetic to mysticism in Judaism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Zion Dinur (Dinaburg), 'Wissenschaft des Judentums', in *EncJud* 21.105–14.

<sup>2</sup> See the works of Heinrich Graetz, Moses Gaster, Leopold Zunz and Abraham Geiger in the bibliography.

Scholem began his study of Jewish mysticism after reading the four-volume work of Franz Josef Molitor, a nineteenth-century Catholic Kabbalist.<sup>3</sup> Scholem sought to answer the twofold question: how *central* was mysticism to normative Judaism and how *ancient* are its origins? We refer to Scholem's quest as the Scholemian Question. He sought to show that Judaism, like Christianity, was progressive and pliable enough to have its own form of mysticism. Against *Wissenschaft* scholars, Scholem therefore argued that mysticism lay near the heart of Judaism as far back as the Second Temple period.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars of Jewish mysticism are still deeply concerned with this so-called Scholemian Question. Dealings with it almost always begin with the Hekhalot movement. *When* this movement thrived has much to do with *how* it relates to normative (rabbinic) Judaism and at what point in history this Jewish form of mysticism came to exist.

There are two basic positions vis-à-vis the Scholemian Question salient today. The majority of scholars align with Scholem. Ithamar Gruenwald, Andrei Orlov, Christopher Rowland, Christopher Morray-Jones, Rachel Elior, Philip Alexander and James Davila are among the lengthy list of advocates of Scholem's thesis.<sup>5</sup> Each advances the argument that what Scholem identified as Jewish mysticism does date back far in history and has always lain near to the heart of normative Judaism.

A number of others, however, answer the Question differently. Ephraim Urbach, David Halperin and Peter Schäfer are among the

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<sup>3</sup> Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 3d rev. ed., 1965), 40–1, 73; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (ed. R.J.Z. Werblowsky; trans. A. Arkush; Princeton: PUP, 1987), 19; idem, *Gnosticism*, 23–4.

<sup>4</sup> Scholem, *Trends*, 43–4.

<sup>5</sup> Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980); idem, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Gnosticism* (BEATAJ 14; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988); Andrei A. Orlov, *From Apocalypticism to Merkavah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (SJSJ 114; Leiden: Brill, 2007); Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery*; Rachel Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (LLJC; trans. D. Louvish; Oxford: Littman, 2005); Alexander, *Mystical Texts*; James R. Davila, 'The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature', in *Paradise Now*, 105–25.

strongest players in this camp.<sup>6</sup> They contend that the earliest literature does not depict any sort of ecstatic-mystical experience. Rather, it points to issues the rabbinic establishment had with uneducated laity dabbling in the exegesis of Ezek 1. Mysticism had always been absent from normative Judaism. Although these scholars have made important contributions to the field, their view of Judaism as absent of (or opposed to) mysticism is reminiscent of that of their *Wissenschaft* predecessors.

### 2.1.2 HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI

The Hekhalot work of interest to us is called Hekhalot Zuṭarti (HZ), or the ‘lesser hekhalot’. The name derives from a remark made by Rav Hai Gaon b. Sherira who lived between ca. 939 and 1038 C.E. In trying to convince some of his students that their predecessors had engaged in mystical-ecstatic practices, he referred them to two works—one called Hekhalot Rabbati and the other Hekhalot Zuṭarti—as evidence of such practices.<sup>7</sup>

HZ is written in Hebrew and Aramaic. It consists of §§335–74 and 407–26 in Schäfer’s *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*.<sup>8</sup> Five of the seven manuscripts comprising HL bear witness to HZ.<sup>9</sup> Even though widely attested in the manuscripts, HZ is probably the ‘least homogeneous’ of all

<sup>6</sup> Ephraim E. Urbach, ‘המסורות על תורת הסוד בתקופת התנאים’ [‘The Traditions about the Esoteric in the Period of the Tannaim’], in *Mysticism and Religion: Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on His Seventieth Birthday* (eds. A. Altmann et al.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 2–11; David J. Halperin, *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (AOS 62; New Haven: AOS, 1980); idem, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel’s Vision* (TSAJ 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988); Schäfer, *Origins*; Alon Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered Paradise Revisited’, *HTR* 88 (Jan 1995): 69–133.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin M. Lewin, *אוצר הגאונים: תשובות גאונים ככל ופירושים על פ*, *סדר דתלמוד* [Otzar ha-Geonim: Thesaurus of the Geonic Responsa and Commentaries Following the Order of the Talmudic Tractates] (vol. 4: Hagigah; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1928), 14. See also Scholem, *Trends*, 49; Arbel, *Beholders*, 32; Morray-Jones, ‘Merkava Mysticism in Rabbinic and Hekhalot Literature’, in *Mystery*, 219–64 [232–3].

<sup>8</sup> Primary texts of HZ include those of Peter Schäfer et al. (eds.), *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981); Peter Schäfer (ed.), *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984); Rachel Elior, *היכלות זוטרתי: כתב יד ניו יורק 8128: מהדורה מדעית* [Hekhalot Zuṭarti: Manuscript New York 8128: Critical Edition] (JSJTSup 1; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> MSS which include HZ are: New York 8128 (N8128); Oxford 1351 (O1351); Munich 40 (M40); Munich 22 (M22); Dropsie 436 (D436); *Geniza-Fragmente* (G).

the works in HL.<sup>10</sup> It consists of many loosely connected strands of tradition that some scholars believe would fit into other macroforms as easily as they do in HZ.<sup>11</sup> Even still, Morray-Jones seems correct in his assessment of the work. ‘Arguably’, he writes, ‘the collection’s looseness of structure and lack of redactional definition are grounds for supposing that it may, at least in part, represent an early stage in the literary development of the hekhalot tradition’.<sup>12</sup> The fact that HZ represents various strands of the same general tradition will become especially important below in §2.3.1.3.

HZ is probably comprised of traditions that were in circulation at least as early as the second or third c. C.E.<sup>13</sup> As Morray-Jones argues, portions of HZ have been found in a Coptic version of a Greek Gnostic work that dates to the third or fourth c. C.E.<sup>14</sup> While Schäfer is probably correct that HZ did not take its final form until some time later, the work records traditions that likely predate even the Bavli.<sup>15</sup>

#### 2.1.2.1 OVERVIEW OF HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI

HZ presents itself as the work of R. Aqiva, who is writing a guidebook for others seeking to enter heaven, travel the seven hekhalot and encounter

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<sup>10</sup> Schäfer, *Hidden*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Schäfer, ‘Prolegomena zur einer kritischen Edition und Analyse der Merkava Rabba’, *FJB* 5 (1977): 65–99 [76–7]; repr. in idem, *Hekhalot-Studien* (TSAJ 19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 17–49; David J. Halperin, ‘A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature’, *JAOS* 104 (1984): 543–52.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion: The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism: A Source-Critical & Tradition-Historical Inquiry* (SJSJ 59; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 86.

<sup>13</sup> On an early dating of the material in the macroform, see Scholem, *Trends*, 45; idem, *Gnosticism*, 75–83; Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, ‘A Version of Hekhalot Zuṭarti’, in *Mystery*, 265–302 [265–6]; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 142–9. Schäfer (‘Aufbau und Redaktionelle Identität der *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*’, *JJS* 33 (1982): 569–82 [582]) considers HR to be older than HZ.

<sup>14</sup> Morray-Jones, ‘Merkava’, 233–4.

<sup>15</sup> Schäfer, ‘Aufbau’, 582; cf. Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 83; Morray-Jones, *Illusion*, 83–7; idem, ‘Hekhalot Zuṭarti’, 266; Elior, *דרכי כלל ופרט*, ii–iii.

God on his Merkavah (HZ 335–37).<sup>16</sup> Scholars disagree as to why, but HL often refers to this mystic as a Yored or Yoredim—a ‘descender’ (sing.: יורד) or ‘descenders’ (plur.: יורדים). The literature thus speaks of the experience of heaven as both a ‘descent’ and an ‘ascent’ (see below ch. 7).

The introductory sections of HZ point to Moses and R. Aqiva as prototypical Yoredim whom others should emulate (340–43). HZ then offers its own version of the Four Entered Pardes (or Hāgigah-Pardes) tradition, which recounts R. Aqiva’s personal journey to the Merkavah (338–39 = 344–46).<sup>17</sup> In 348–50 R. Aqiva recalls the message given to him by the Bath Qol (בַּת קוֹל) while in heaven, which offers a portrait of what the successful Yored will look like. This is followed by a set of descriptions of the Lord on his throne (351–56), an expansive list of the divine name(s) the Yored is to use to descend the throne safely and successfully (357–67) and an even more elaborate visionary account of the Merkavah (368–75). The second major division of HZ elaborates further on R. Aqiva’s vision of God on his throne (407–12), providing additional instruction as to how to obtain the experience (413–19). The work concludes with R. Aqiva’s summary list of instructions for ‘ascending and descending to the Merkavah’ (422–26).

### 2.1.2.2 PURPOSE OF HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI

As noted above, HZ 335 establishes the purpose of the work:<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Scholem, *Trends*, 40–79; idem, *Gnosticism*, 75–83; idem, *Kabbalah*, 14–21; cf. Morray-Jones, ‘Merkava’, 233; Schäfer, ‘Merkavah Mysticism and Magic’, in *Gershom Scholem’s Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism, Berlin, February 1992* (eds. P. Schäfer and J. Dan; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 59–78 [66–8]; Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History* (BBHR; Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 107–9; eadem, ‘Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses to the *Hekhalot* Literature’, *HUCA* 59 (1988): 73–100; eadem, ‘The Practice of Ascent in the Ancient Mediterranean World’, in *Other Worldly Journeys*, 121–36 [126–7]; Idel, *Kabbalah*, 88–91; Paula R. Gooder, *Only the Third Heaven? 2 Corinthians 12.1–10 and Heavenly Ascent* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 131–50.

<sup>17</sup> What we call the Hāgigah-Pardes tradition David Halperin has labelled the ‘mystical collection’: i.e. *m. Hag.* 2.1; *t. Hag.* 2.3–4; *y. Hag.* 2.1, 77b; *b. Hag.* 14b–15b; *Song Rab.* 1.4 (so Halperin, *Merkabah*).

<sup>18</sup> Text predominantly follows O1531; cf. Morray-Jones, ‘Hekhalot Zuṭarti’, 274.

אם אתה רוצה להתיחד<sup>20</sup> בעולם לגלות לך רזי<sup>19</sup> עולם  
 וסתרי חכמה<sup>21</sup> הוי שונה את המשנה הזאת והוי זהיר  
 בה עד יום פרישתך<sup>22</sup> אל תבין מה של אחריו ואל תחקור אמרי  
 שפתותיך מה שבל יבך תבין ותדום כדי שתזכה ליופיות המרכבה  
 הוי זהיר בכבוד קונך ואל דרד לו ואם ירדת לו  
 אל תהנה<sup>24</sup> ממנו ואם נהנית ממנו<sup>23</sup> סופך להטרד מן העולם  
 כבוד אל הים הסתר דבר (Prov 25.2) כדי שלא תטרד מן העולם

Whoever desires to achieve *unification* in this world, to have the secrets of the world and the mysteries of wisdom revealed to you, recite this Mishnah—but be careful about it—on the day you set yourself apart. Do not consider what is behind you, and do not investigate the sayings of your lips. Understand what is in your heart, and keep silent, so that you will be worthy of the beauty of the Merkavah.

Be careful about the glory of your creator, and do not descend to him. And if you have descended to him, do not derive benefit from him. And if you have fed on him, your end is to be cast out from the world. 'The glory of God is to conceal a matter' (Prov 25.2), so that you may not be cast out from the world (HZ 335).<sup>25</sup>

The means to obtaining this experience is to recite 'this Mishnah'  
 (המשנה הזאת), which is likely a reference to the collective instruction R.  
 Aqiva will give throughout HZ, which the Yored is to learn and follow  
 impeccably.

R. Aqiva offers additional instruction near the end of HZ:<sup>26</sup>

א' ר' עקיבה כל מי שהוא מבקש<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> M22 and D436: רזי; O1531: רזי.

<sup>20</sup> Schäfer comments that a translation such as 'to be unique' (*einzigartig sein*) or 'chosen' (*ausgewählt*) is plausible (*Übersetzung* §335 and n. 3; cf. idem, *Hidden*, 70).

<sup>21</sup> M22: מרכבה.

<sup>22</sup> The meaning of עד יום פרישתך is ambiguous. See Morray-Jones ('Hekhalot Zutarti', 274): 'the day in which you set yourself apart'; Schäfer (*Übersetzung* §335): 'bis zum Tag deiner Absonderung' or 'bis zum Tag deines Hinscheidens' [*Übersetzung* §335 n. 10]).

<sup>23</sup> N8128 and M22 add the subordinate clause ואם נהנית ממנו, though it is absent from the other MSS.

<sup>24</sup> M40 and D436: תחקור תהנה (lit: 'investigate feed').

<sup>25</sup> English translations of all Hekhalot texts are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>26</sup> Text predominantly follows O1531.

<sup>27</sup> 'To desire/seek' (בקש). בקש is the piel participle of בקש, suggesting a continuous, intensive pursuit of the mystical encounter with God.

לשנות<sup>29</sup> את המשנה הזאת ולפרש השם בפירושו<sup>28</sup>  
 ישב בתענית ארבעים יום ויניח את ראשו בין ברכיו עד  
 שהתענית שולטת בו<sup>31</sup> ולחש<sup>30</sup> לארץ ולא לשמים ותשמע  
 הארץ ולא שמים ואם נער הוא יאמרו עד שלא  
 יוציא זרע ואם בעל אשה ה' יהיה נכון לשלשה  
 ימים שני והיו נכנים לשלשת ימים אל תיגעו  
 אל אשה<sup>32</sup> (Exod 19.15) ...

ויהא רגיל<sup>33</sup> בו מחדש לחדש ומשנה לשנה שלושים יום  
 קודם ראש השנה מראש חדש אלול עד יום כפורים  
 כדי שלא יסמין עליו סמן ופגע כל השנה כולה

R. Akiva said: Anyone is desiring/seeking to learn/repeat this mishnah and to pronounce the Name with its letters should sit in fast for forty days and rest his head between his knees until the fast overcomes him. And he should whisper it to the ground and not to heaven, so the ground might hear but not heaven. If he is a[n] (unmarried) youth, he should say it as long as he has had no emission. And if he is a married man, he should be celibate for three days. As it is said, 'Be prepared for three days. Do not go near a woman' (Exod 19.15) ...

He should become habitual in it, from month to month and year to year, for thirty days before Rosh Hashanah, from the beginning of the month of Elul until Yom Kippur,<sup>34</sup> so that Satan and evil shall not afflict him all year (HZ 424).

An intriguing link between HZ 335 and 424 is the element of warning. The descent is incredibly dangerous and not to be done lackadaisically, as it will surely lead to the demise of anyone who makes even the most obscure of mistakes (cf. MM 565–7). R. Aqiva is one of only a few who can legitimately explain how to descend the Merkavah safely and successfully (cf. MM 595).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Schäfer: 'den Namen in seiner Bedeutung zu erklären' (*Übersetzung* §424 n. 2).

<sup>29</sup> 'To learn/repeat' (שנה).

<sup>30</sup> 'To whisper' (לחש); cf. *b. Hag.* 14a; *b. B. Bat.* 134a; *b. B. Meši'a* 59a; *Gen Rab.* 3.4; *Lev Rab.* 9.9; 31.7.

<sup>31</sup> 'To overcome' (שלט). On שלט, see e.g. *b. B. Bat.* 16b–17a, where God gives Abraham, Isaac and Jacob a foretaste of the World to Come while they were still alive. Because of this, their evil inclinations could were no longer able to 'overcome' (שלט) them.

<sup>32</sup> M22 includes אל תיגעו אל אשה ('Do not go near a woman') in keeping with Moses' instructions in Exod 19.15.

<sup>33</sup> 'To become habitual' (רגיל). Cf. Morray-Jones: 'practice it regularly' ('Hekhalot Zutarti', 301).

<sup>34</sup> On Yom Kippur in HL, see Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (WUNT 2.163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 134–41.

## 2.2 HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI 348–50

The principal text of our investigation of HL is HZ 348–50.<sup>35</sup> Written in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the pericope reads as follows:<sup>36</sup>

348 א'ר עקיבא באותה שעה שעליתי למרכבה  
יצאה בת קול מתחת כסא הכבוד<sup>37</sup> מדברת  
לשון ארמית בלשון הזה מה היא מדברת עד לא  
עבד יוי שמיא וארקא אתקן בניבה<sup>38</sup>  
לרקיעא<sup>39</sup> למיעל בה למיפק בה ואין רזין  
בה<sup>43</sup> אלא מבו<sup>42</sup> אתקן שמה יציבה למושול<sup>41</sup> בהיכל עליו<sup>40</sup>

349 ומה בר נשא דיכול  
למיסק לעילא  
למרכב גלגלין למיחת  
לתחתא למחקור תבל  
למהלכא ביבשתא  
למיסתכלא בזויה  
לאשראה בתגיה  
למתהפכה ביקריה<sup>44</sup>  
למימר שבחא למדבקה אתיין למימר שמהן  
למיצפי לעילא  
ולמצפי לתתא  
למדע בפרוש חייא ולמחזי בחזות מתייא

<sup>35</sup> Many scholars have recognised the value of this text but have yet to expand on it in any depth. See Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 77–81; Schäfer, *Origins*, 288; DeConick, 'What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?', in *Paradise Now*, 1–24 [1]; Davila, *Descenders*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Text predominantly follows O1531. Cf. MR 674; G7 2a 15b–19a.

<sup>37</sup> O1531 omits the definite article (ה), while the others retain it. We take הכבוד as a proper name of God: 'The Glory'.

<sup>38</sup> So O1531. Cf. N8128: בנדב; M40: כנוכה; M22: בגיזבא; D436: כיוזבה; G7: כמידבא. Schäfer, *Übersetzung* §348 and nn. 14, 15; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 148; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 77–8.

<sup>39</sup> M22 omits לרקיעא. See Schäfer, *Übersetzung* §348 n. 16.

<sup>40</sup> למיפל עליו follows M40.

<sup>41</sup> למושול follows M40 and D436, which Schäfer (*Übersetzung* §348 n. 23) maintains is a corruption of למשול.

<sup>42</sup> 'Access' or 'gateway' (מבו). Schäfer (*Übersetzung* §348): אלא מבו reads 'meint nichts anderes als (einen Zugang)'. Morray-Jones ('Hekhalot Zuṭarti', 278): 'means nothing other than "gateway"'. Davila (*Descenders*, 175) and Scholem (*Gnosticism*, 78): 'a vestibule'. Cf. Eilior, *היכלות זוטרתי*, 64.

<sup>43</sup> So M40 and D436. Schäfer (*Übersetzung* §348 n. 18) translates רזין as 'geheimnisse'.

<sup>44</sup> So O1531.



למהלכה בנהרי נורא ולמדע בברקא

350 ומן יכיל לפרושי ומן יכיל לחזויי מן קדמת דגן  
כתוב כי לא יראני האדם וחי (Exod 33.20) ותניינתייה כת' כי ידבר  
אלהים את האדם וחי (Deut 5.21, 24) ותליתיה כת' ואראה  
את יוי יושב על כסא (Isa 6.1)

348 R. Aqiva said: At the time when I ascended to the Merkavah, a Bath Qol went forth from beneath the throne of The Glory. It spoke in the Aramaic language. In this language, what did it say? 'Before the Lord made heaven and earth, he established BNYBH for the Raqia by which to enter and to exit—(such) secrets are for nothing other than (gaining) access. He established the immovable Name by which to (become) master<sup>45</sup> in the Hekhal upon it.<sup>46</sup>

349 'And what human is able  
To ascend to above  
To ride the wheels of Merkavah,  
To descend to below  
To investigate the world,  
To walk on dry land  
To gaze upon his splendour,  
To dwell by (means of) his crown  
To be transformed by (means of) his glory,  
To utter praise, to combine letters, to utter names,<sup>47</sup>  
To look above,  
And to look below,  
To know the explanation of life and to behold the vision of the dead,  
To walk on/in/through rivers of fire and to learn the lightning?<sup>48</sup>

350 'And who is able to explain, and who is able to behold?  
First, it is written, "For no human can see me and live" (Exod 33.20).  
Second, it is written, "For God speaks to the human and he lives" (Deut 5.21, 24).  
And third, it is written, "And I saw God sitting on the throne" (Isa 6.1).

This text is a compendium of the Yored who successfully descends the Merkavah. It offers a vivid depiction of what the successful descent brings about. It also provides biblical support for the experience, indicating that Moses (so Exod 33.20 and Deut 5.21, 24) and Isaiah (Isa 6.1) both

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Schäfer: 'zu beherrschen' (*Übersetzung* §348 n. 23).

<sup>46</sup> The 'mastery' of the world is not that of God himself but of the one who makes use of the Name.

<sup>47</sup> Davila (*Descenders*, 222–4) compares this with the Syriac magic bowls. Cf. Lesses, *Practices*, 16–20, 130–1; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 77–81.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Schäfer's translation of HZ 349 (*Übersetzung* §349).

encountered and beheld God on his throne in a manner the Yored is alleged to be capable of doing.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.2.1 DESCENT AND TORAH

Torah lies at the heart of the mystical programme of HZ.<sup>50</sup> According to HZ 341, Moses received Torah at Sinai, passing it down eventually to R. Aqiva, who is now making it available to others (cf. *m. 'Abot* 1.1):

This is the book (זוה ספר) of wisdom and understanding and knowledge and the investigation from above and below, the visions (צפוני)<sup>51</sup> of Torah, of heaven and of earth, and the secrets, which were given to Moses son of Amram, of the perception of YH YH HYH YW SB'WT, the God of Israel. And he gave (it) to him at Horeb, on which the world might stand (שעולם עומד בה)<sup>52</sup>

'This book' (בדברי תורה) refers to the 'matters of Torah' (זה ספר) described in HZ 340, and in it the Yored can gain understanding of heaven and earth.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, this is an experience to which outsiders have no access (HZ 426; cf. *b. Šabb.* 119a).

### 2.2.2 DESCENT AND THE NAME

Like Torah, the divine Name is a powerful theurgic tool that is likewise a means of accessing heaven and the vision of God on his Merkavah.<sup>54</sup> Karl Erich Grözinger discusses what he calls the 'onomatological system' of HL, or its treatment of divine names.<sup>55</sup> He notes that oftentimes in HL 'the

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<sup>49</sup> On Moses, see *b. Šabb.* 88b–89a; *Tg. Ket.* Ps 68.19; *Exod Rab.* 28.1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20.4; 47.4; *Midr. Pss.* 22.19; 68.11; *Pirke R. El.* 46; *'Abot R. Nat.* 2.3, 18b.

<sup>50</sup> Schäfer, *Hidden*, 72.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *b. Meg.* 24b: 'they had visions of the Merkavah' (צפו למרכבה); Jastrow 1296–7.

<sup>52</sup> Text found only in N8128.

<sup>53</sup> Schäfer, *Hidden*, 74–5.

<sup>54</sup> Schäfer, 'Magic', 69–71.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Erich Grözinger, 'The Names of God and the Celestial Powers: Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature', *מחקרי ירושלים במחשבת ישראל*, [Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought] 6.1–2 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1987): 53–69 [61], cf.

highest deity gives some of its own names away because the *participation in God's Name is participation in God's power, and thus in the deity itself*.<sup>56</sup>

The divine Name enables the Yored to descend safely and successfully precisely because by invoking the divine Name, this individual is staking a share in the very presence of God (HR 204; 219; 229; HZ 337; 413–7; MM 586; cf. below §2.3.1).<sup>57</sup> To utilise God's Name is to unite to God himself.

HL considers the divine Name to have immense power. It is so powerful that the heavenly entourage trembles in fear of it (SQ 384; 972).<sup>58</sup> By it God created heaven and earth (3 *En.* 10.5; 19.7; 22.5; HR 166; HZ 421; 497; SQ 473; MM 587; ShP 629; 637; SRdB 832; 837).<sup>59</sup> It protects the Yoredim while they pass through the various hekhalot (MM 561; 566; 568; 569),<sup>60</sup> enabling them to understand the mysteries of Torah ascertained therein (HR 279; 302; 303; HZ 336; 340; MM 568; 569; 570; 586; HdM 606; MR 656; 676).<sup>61</sup> And as we explain below, by it the Yored gains mastery over those in heaven (ShP 623).<sup>62</sup>

The multi-functional nature of the Name we find elsewhere in HL is likely assumed in HZ's reference to the 'immovable Name' (שֵׁם הַיָּסוֹדִי, §335). Here we learn that God established the 'immovable Name' so that humans might use it to enter heaven through that mysterious 'access' (מַבְוֵי) to Raqia. Making use of the Name is thus critically important. For

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54–5. Cf. Peter Schäfer, 'Der göttliche Name. Geheimnis und Offenbarung in der Merkava-Mystik', in *Geheimnis und Offenbarung* (SS 2; eds. A. Assmann et al.; Munich: Fink, 1998), 143–59; Guy G. Stroumsa, 'A Nameless God: Judaeo-Christian and Gnostic theologies of the Name', in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (WUNT 2.158; eds. P.J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 230–44.

<sup>56</sup> Grözinger, 'Names', 61, italics my own. Cf. Scholem, *Trends*, 56; idem, *Gnosticism*, 20–30, 57–63, 75–83; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 103–7; Philip S. Alexander, 'The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch', *JJS* 28 (1977): 156–80 [170–1]; Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 124–34; Rachel Eilior, 'From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayers and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions', *JSQ* 4 (1997): 217–67 [230–1].

<sup>57</sup> Grözinger, 'Names', 56 nn. 22, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 56; cf. Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 80–1; idem, *Trends*, 358.

<sup>59</sup> Grözinger, 'Names', 56 and n. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 56 n. 24.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 56 nn. 23, 25.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 56 n. 26.

one thing, it enables the Yored to retain what he or she learns during the heavenly descent (HZ 336; cf. 340; 362–8; 375). Being able to remember Torah is important not least because it is the means, along with the Name, by which the Yored descends the Merkavah.<sup>63</sup>

What is more, it is ‘upon’ (עליו) this Name that the Yored is to stand, and by doing so he becomes able ‘to (become) master’ (למושל) in the Hekhal (בהיכל). That is to say, by means of the Name the Yored gains mastery over the celestial realm (HZ 348, 365). Following M40 we translate למושל בהיכל עליו to read ‘He established the immovable Name by which to (become) master in the Hekhal upon it’. The wording of M40 is ambiguous, to be sure, and the other manuscripts do not attest to this reading. However, it makes sense that the scribe of M40 would insert ם between בה and כל—two separate words in O1531, N8128 and M22—to form the compound בהיכל (‘in the hekhal’). The היכל in which (ב) the Yored is said ‘to (become) master’ (למושל) is that within which the very ‘throne of The Glory’ (כסא הכבוד) is found. By invoking the ‘immovable Name’, the Yored thus gains mastery (למושל) over all that might potentially keep him from reaching the throne of The Glory.

To summarise, invoking or chanting the Name is among the first steps in obtaining knowledge of Torah and descending the Merkavah (HZ 348).<sup>64</sup> It is a dangerous enterprise, and even the slightest misuse of the Name leads to destruction. When Torah and the Name are utilised properly, however, the benefits are surely great.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Morray-Jones, ‘Hekhalot Zutarti’, 288–91; idem, *Illusion*, 374–91; Halperin, *Faces*, 390–3.

<sup>64</sup> Grözinger, ‘Names’, 59.

## 2.3 DESCENT AND GLORIFICATION IN HEKHALOT ZUTARTI

Two ontoanthropological elements present themselves as being of prime concern to the composers of HZ. The first has to do with the Yored's cognitive faculties—specifically, his or her ability to remember every piece of knowledge ascertained in heaven. The second has to do with his or her physical body. For it seems to be the case that the Yored is thought to become capable of surviving otherwise fatal experiences in heaven in a way others are not.

### 2.3.1 TRANSFORMED BY HIS *LICHTSTOFF*

Our analysis of HZ centres on §349, where we find a peculiar statement about being 'transformed by (means of) his glory' (לְמַתְּהַפֵּכָה בִּיקְרִיָּה). This remark seems implicitly ontological: it supposes that the Yored undergoes some type of change upon contacting the divine 'glory' (יְקָרָא). The nature of this change remains to be seen.

#### 2.3.1.1 TO DWELL BY (MEANS OF) HIS CROWN

First, scholars render the ambiguous לְאִישְׁרָאָה בְּתִגִּיָּה in a variety of ways. Scholem translated this 'to dwell with his crown', though even he betrayed some uncertainty regarding his own translation.<sup>65</sup> Schäfer prefers the translation 'to make use of' because it aligns with the notions of combining letters, and because the idea of 'dwelling *with* God's crown' is not attested anywhere else.<sup>66</sup>

We prefer the translation 'to dwell by (means of) his crown'. The key to our translation is the presence of the כ prefix to תִּגִּיָּה ('crown').

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<sup>65</sup> Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 78.

<sup>66</sup> Schäfer (*Origins*, 288 and *Übersetzung* §349 n. 11) discusses the translations 'to dwell' and 'to make use of'.

This כ is probably an instrumental כ, or a כ of means, in which case the crown (תגיד) is the means ‘by which’ (כ) the Yored is able ‘to dwell’ (לאִישְׂרָאֵל) in the divine presence. It has long been common to view the divine crown (Heb: כתר; Aram: כְּתֹרָא), like the divine Name and Torah, as a theurgical tool by which humans can enter heaven and behold God in his glory (HZ 360; cf. HR 236; 289–91; *ʿAbot* 1.13; 4.5; *b. Meg.* 28b; *b. Ned.* 62a; *b. Šabb.* 104a).<sup>67</sup> HZ 349 seems to have this idea in mind as well. Understanding the crown this way aligns with what follows in the description of the Yored in our pericope.

### 2.3.1.2 TO BE TRANSFORMED BY (MEANS OF) HIS GLORY

Second, those deemed fit to enter God’s presence find themselves undergoing a most radical transformative experience. As we read, the Yored is able ‘to be transformed by (means of) his glory’ (לְמַתְּהַפְּכָהּ (בִּיקְרִיָּה). As in the previous line, the כ here indicates that the very presence of God is also the means by which those who encounter it are changed.

The term לְמַתְּהַפְּכָהּ is the hithpael infinitive of הִפָּךְ. הִפָּךְ can have a range of meanings, including negative ones (‘be destroyed’), neutral ones (‘turn’, ‘be turned’) and positive ones (‘change’, ‘transform’). הִפָּךְ probably denotes a positive change (‘transform’), given the overall positive tone of HZ 348–50.

When הִפָּךְ appears in the passive/reflexive stems—niphal and hithpael—as it does here, it describes *one thing becoming changed into something else*. Because of God’s power, for example, the rivers were ‘changed’ into blood during the plagues on Egypt (Exod 7.15, 17, 20), and ‘the earth is changed like clay (by) a seal’ (Job 38.14). According to

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (SUNYSJ; Albany: SUNY, 1992), 50–1, 71.

Rabbinic literature (RL), **הפך** denotes being ‘disguised’ or ‘changed in appearance’.<sup>68</sup> God is said, for example, to have given the Israelites manna to eat in the wilderness. Hence ‘they ate the manna which changed (**שנהפך**) into many tastes’ (*Num Rab.* 19.21).<sup>69</sup> *Gen Rab.* 21.9 explains too that angels can ‘be changed’ (**מהתפכים**) into men, women, spirits and even, as in Gen 3.24, into flaming swords like those ‘turning’ back and forth at the entrance of the Garden of Eden.

The sense of **הפך** found in these examples is likely present in HZ 349, too. As we have seen, the Yored has been made ‘able’ (**יכול**) ‘to be transformed by (means of) his glory’ (**למהתפכה ביקריה**). The transformation is almost certainly ontological, as the following sections will illustrate.

Murray-Jones’ earlier translation captures the twofold idea we suggest is inherent in this line. He renders the phrase **למהתפכה ביקריה** to read, ‘To be transformed into his glory’.<sup>70</sup> The notion underlying this line, however it is translated, is to be transformed *by* God’s glory is, by consequence, to be transformed *into* his glory. The divine glory is both the means by which transformation happens and the *Stoff* into which the human is changed. This suggestion will surely find substantiation as our discussion progresses.

It is worth noting here that what may be in view here is some type of outward glorification, perhaps resembling that of Enoch-Metatron in both *2 En.* and *3 En.* The latter work is particularly suggestive. For as we see below, *3 En.* employs the same form of **הפך** in describing Enoch’s transformation into Metatron that we find in the description of the Yored in HZ 349 (see §§2.3.1.3.3–2.3.1.3.5).

<sup>68</sup> Jastrow 361.

<sup>69</sup> אוכלין את המן שנהפך למטעמים הרבה

<sup>70</sup> Christopher R.A. Murray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul’s Apostolate. Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance’, *HTR* 86 (July 1993): 265–92 [279]. His more recent translation of the line replaces the preposition ‘into’ with ‘in’ (*Hekhalot Zutarti*, 278).

### 2.3.1.3 TO DIE SATURATED IN HIS LICHTSTOFF

Third, whereas we have chosen to follow O1531 in its reading of the line לַמִּתְהַפְכָּה בִּיקְרִיָּה, the alternatives to this may shed some light on the broader tradition contained in HZ 349. Other readings of this line include:

לַמִּשְׁתַּבַּח בִּיקְרִיָּה (N8128)

לַמִּתְהַפְכָּה בִּיקְרִיָּה (M40 and D436)

לַמִּיתָה סַבָּא בִּיקְרִיָּה (M22)

N8128, M40 and D436 do not differ from O1531 in any significant way. M22, however, offers a most peculiar reading. It is surely ambiguous, but M22 appears to read something like ‘to die saturated in his glory’ (לַמִּיתָה לַסַּבָּא בִּיקְרִיָּה).<sup>71</sup>

#### 2.3.1.3.1 SATURATION AND DEATH

Such a translation no doubt requires some explanation. Firstly, the key term in the line לַמִּיתָה סַבָּא בִּיקְרִיָּה is the verb סַבָּא, which we translate ‘to saturate’. סַבָּא is widely used of being ‘filled’ with liquid or ‘drunk’ on wine, the latter having to do with being *too* full.<sup>72</sup> Thus while O1531 depicts the Yored’s experience as a *transformation* by means of the divine Glory, M22 understands it as a glorious *saturation* of some kind. More on this will be said shortly below.

Secondly, coming to a definitive understanding of לַמִּיתָה is rather difficult. The term may be either an infinitive (‘to die’; cf. b. Ber 17a) or a

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<sup>71</sup> Morray-Jones (‘Paradise Revisited. Part 2’, 279 n. 44) tentatively suggests the line be translated, ‘to become old [or learned] with honor’.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. Deut 21.20; Isa 56.12; Nah 1.10; cf. Ezek 23.42; b. Nid. 24b; b. B. Bat. 98a; b. Ketub. 10a; Tg. Onq. Deut 21.20; Gen Rab. 56.4.



noun ('death'; cf. b. Ber 57b). Taking לָמִיתָהּ as an infinitive is somewhat difficult. There are some seventeen infinitives that begin with the לָ prefix in the thirteen lines that comprise HZ 349.

### 2.3.1.3.2 THE MODEL OF INITIATORY DEATH

The view of passing through death in a positive light finds ample attestation in the history of religions. Indeed, it may well be that HZ 349 is proffering an experience anthropologists refer to as 'initatory death and rebirth'.<sup>73</sup> Mircea Eliade established some time ago that many cultures view initiation into a new group or class—to the ranks of shaman, for example—as entering a new state of being.<sup>74</sup> They often conceive of the path to obtaining this new state in terms of death, or dying to one's former state.<sup>75</sup> Only by passing through this so-called initiatory death can the individual now enter his or her new transformed state of being. As Eliade frames it, 'One dies to one mode of being in order to be able to attain to another. Death constitutes an abrupt change of ontological level, and at the same time a rite of passage, just as birth does, or initiation'.<sup>76</sup>

What we find in HZ 349 aligns well with this anthropological concept. The text may not be saying that the Yored necessarily dies at some point. He or she seems to undergo a *destruction* of his or her old self: a *deconstruction* that then leads to *reconstruction*. The presence of God had long been thought to be intrinsically fatal (Exod 33.20; Isa 6.5; Jn 1.18; 1 Tim 6.16). As Chernus explains, '[A]nnihilation of the self . . . must

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<sup>73</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 33–73.

<sup>74</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. W.R. Trask; New York: Harcourt, 1959), 187; idem, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: Birth and Rebirth* (trans. W.R. Trask; London: Harvill, 1958), 131–6; idem, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (trans. W.R. Trask; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 76.

<sup>75</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (trans. P. Mairet; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 191–7; idem, *The Two and the One* (trans. J.M. Cohen; Chicago: UCP, 1965), 13–14.

<sup>76</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 241–2.

be accepted as part of the mystical experience. In fact it is the culmination of the experience, for it is precisely the self-revelation of God which causes the death of the mystic'.<sup>77</sup> The Yored, in other words, enters before God and passes through a death-like state, only to enter the glorious state that comes from being saturated in the divine presence.<sup>78</sup>

Certainly it would be problematic to adopt *both* the reading of O1531 and M22. However, both O1531 and M22 derive from and, in essence, aim to preserve material from the same complex of traditions much the way the synoptic gospels do with the Jesus traditions. To suggest that one manuscript understood the core tradition one way (i.e. O1531), while another understood this same tradition slightly differently (i.e. M22), is not unreasonable. Each manuscript has sought to preserve and pass on a common tradition that had to do with a type of ontological *transformation*, as O1531 emphasises, that comes about by way of an experience of glorious *saturation*, as M22 emphasises.

HZ 349 therefore states that by coming into contact with God, the Yored becomes 'saturated' by the splendid light of his being. We speak of the divine 'glory' (קֶרֶן) in terms of a *Lichtstoff* because of its quasi-material nature. It is an entity that can mix with the Yored and change his or her physical body such that it resembles the glory of God himself. Our designating the glory as *Lichtstoff* is therefore not to say that God's glory is physical but simply that it can affect the human body *as if it were physical*. Hence both O1531 and M22 pass on a tradition in which a person who makes contact with God's glory (קֶרֶן) becomes so inundated (סבא) by it that he or she cannot but undergo ontological change (הפך).

Our suggestion that the Yored's transformative experience entails a saturation of God's *Lichtstoff* is made more plausible by the fact that the Yored is said to be able 'to gaze upon [God's] splendour' (למיסתכלא)

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<sup>77</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 40.

<sup>78</sup> Eliade, *Myths*, 226–7; Chernus, *Mysticism*, 51–3.

(בזייה). This image may link HZ 349, as a representative of Genus 2, to the chief idea in Genus 4: the experience of mystical transformation via ingestion of the divine presence (see Part IV). Species 4B (chapter seven) asserts that certain humans are able to behold God's splendour, ingest it through their eyes and become angel-like in the process. Our reading of HZ 349 becomes quite conceivable when one realises that this is a well-documented tradition that reached its apex in rabbinic times.

Moreover, if Grözinger's understanding of the Name in HL is correct—that to make use of it is to participate in God's presence—then it is hard *not* to understand the tradition behind HZ 349 common to both O1531 and M22 as describing an experience of *union* between the Yored and God.<sup>79</sup> By making use of the Name, the Yored becomes so close to God's presence that he or she becomes 'saturated' (סבס) in his radiant, quasi-material *Lichtstoff*, or יקרס'.

#### 2.3.1.3.3 ENOCH'S TRANSFORMATION INTO METATRON IN 3 ENOCH

Among the most well-known accounts of transformation in ancient Jewish literature is that of Enoch into Metatron in *3 Enoch* 3–15. Because HZ 348–50 leaves aside many colourful details about the Yored's experience, *3 Enoch* 3–15 becomes especially important. Its portrait of transformation is rather elaborate in comparison to that of our pericope.

*3 En.* recounts R. Ishmael's journey to heaven where Metatron describes his transformation from Enoch into Metatron (chs. 3–16). Early in the narrative, Metatron reveals to R. Ishmael that he is Enoch—or that he was Enoch before becoming Metatron (4.1–10). He then walks R. Ishmael through the steps of his exaltation and transformation, during which he is elevated (chs. 6–7), enlarged beyond measure (ch. 9), placed on a throne (ch. 10), given secrets of heaven (ch. 11), dressed in a new

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<sup>79</sup> Grözinger, 'Names', 53–69.

robe and crown and given a new name (ch. 12–13), and receives the praise of the celestial hosts (ch. 14).

In *3 En.* 15, then, Metatron describes his fiery transformation before God:

When the Holy One, blessed be he, took me to serve the throne of glory, the wheels of the chariot, and all the needs of the Šekinah, at once my flesh was turned (נִהְפֵךְ) to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals, my eyelashes to lightning flashes, my eyeballs to fiery torches, the hairs of my head to hot flames, all my limbs to wings of burning fire, and the substance of my body to blazing fire (*3 En.* 15.1 [SH 19]; cf. *3 En.* 48C.6 [SH 73]).<sup>80</sup>

After describing the way each part of his body has changed (his flesh, sinews, bones etc.), Enoch-Metatron declares that the ‘substance of [his] body [was changed] to blazing fire’ (*3 En.* 15.1). The very fibres of his physical body have therefore ‘been changed’ (נִהְפֵךְ) to heavenly fire-substance—or more accurately, a substance akin to that of God himself. It is no wonder that all of heaven now trembles before him (14.5), fearing and adoring him to the point that there is some confusion as to how many ‘powers’ indeed exist in heaven (17.3).

It is important to note that both HZ 349 and *3 En.* 15.1 employ the passive form of נִהְפֵךְ to describe the transformation of the Yored and Enoch-Metatron, respectively. Enoch-Metatron is changed (נִהְפֵךְ) from a human substance to a fiery angelic one, taking possession of a body that approximates the fiery properties of heaven (cf. HR 213–15, 269; MM 549; 551; 552; 554; *3 En.* 2.1; 6.2; 13.2; 15.1; MR 692; SRdB 776; 781).<sup>81</sup> It would not be implausible to think that the Yored has had the same type of transformative experience, though this remains to be seen.

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<sup>80</sup> Unless otherwise noted, English translations of *3 Enoch* are those of Philip S. Alexander, ‘3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch’, in *OTP* 1.223–315.

<sup>81</sup> Schäfer, *Hidden*, 79–80; Davila, *Descenders*, 136–9.

#### 2.3.1.3.4 ENOCH'S TRANSFORMATION BEFORE GOD IN 2 ENOCH

An earlier work in the Enochic tradition, *2 En.*, offers yet another account of the ascent and transformation of Enoch. He changes, in this case, not into Metatron but into a high-ranking angel-like priest and scribe. The episode reaches a climax in the tenth heaven. Overwhelmed by the sight of God, Enoch falls on his face. Michael lifts him to his feet and places him before the Lord whereupon Enoch undergoes a radical transformation. The text recalls:

1 And on the 10<sup>th</sup> heaven, Aravoth, I saw the view of the face of the LORD, like iron made burning hot in a fire [and] brought out, and it emits sparks and is incandescent. Thus even I saw the face of the LORD. But the face of the LORD is not to be talked about, it is so very marvelous and supremely awesome and supremely frightening . . .

6 And the LORD said to his servants, sounding them out, 'Let Enoch join in and stand in front of my face forever!' 7 And the LORD's glorious ones did obeisance and said, 'Let Enoch yield in accordance with your word, O LORD!' 8 And the LORD said to Michael, 'Go, and extract Enoch from [his] earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory'. 9 And so Michael did, just as the LORD had said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun [rec. A: 'its shining is like the sun']. 10 And I looked at myself [rec A: 'gazed at all of myself'], and I had become like one of his [rec A: 'the'] glorious ones, and there was no observable difference (*2 En.* 22.1, 6–10 [JJ]).

Having come before God, Enoch is transformed, becoming so glorious that indeed 'there [is] no observable difference' between him and the 'glorious ones' around him.

Three points from this text move us towards a better understanding of HZ 348–50. First, God invites Enoch to 'join in and stand in front of my [i.e. God's] face forever' (v. 7). Second, Enoch is removed from his 'earthly clothing', anointed with 'my [God's] delightful oil' and dressed in 'the clothes of my [God's] glory' (v. 8). The oil is so glorious that it 'is greater than the greatest light' and 'like the rays of the glittering sun' (v. 9). Third, Enoch's experience is unambiguously real and

bodily, as opposed to a dream or vision, for he emphasises at the outset that his journey is taking place ‘in actuality’ (2 *En.* 1.6 [JJ]).<sup>82</sup>

The critical point of contact between 2 *En.* 22 and HZ 349 is the way Michael anoints Enoch with the Lord’s own glory. A major clue as to what this means may be found in the description of the Lord’s clothing in 1 *En.* 14, where we read, ‘And the Great Glory was sitting upon [the throne]—as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow’ (1 *En.* 14.20).<sup>83</sup> God’s clothes resemble those clothes and the glory Enoch receives in 2 *En.* 22, 56. Each are resplendent, comparable to the rays of the sun. When God refers to the clothing as ‘my glory’ in 2 *En.* 22.8 (cf. 56.2), he is claiming to have given a piece of his own radiance—his own *being*, in fact—to Enoch. In this way Enoch is changed to be like the ‘glorious ones’ around him.

#### 2.3.1.3.5 ENOCH-METATRON AND THE YORED COMPARED

The transformative experience of the Yored of HZ resembles that of Enoch on several counts, though the latter gives considerably more detail. For example, HZ 346 reports that the Yored is actually invited to come before God in a manner reminiscent of Enoch’s invitation in 2 *En.* 22.6 (cf. 21.3; 21.5; 22.7; *T. Levi* 2.10). Here the Yored is made capable of surviving the heavenly elements—the wheels of Merkavah, the vision of the divine glory, the rivers of fire—and God’s immediate presence (see §2.3.2). The Yored also gains the ability to learn and retain the otherwise unknowable mysteries of heaven and earth (see §2.3.3).<sup>84</sup> Not surprisingly, Enoch too undergoes cognitive changes that enable him to learn and remember, as

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<sup>82</sup> Andrei A. Orlov, ‘In the Mirror of the Divine Face: The Enochic Features of the Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian’ in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (TBN 13; eds. G.J. Brooke et al.: Leiden: Brill, 2008), 183–99 [187–8].

<sup>83</sup> All English translations of 1 *En.* are taken from E. Isaac, ‘1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch’, in *OTP* 1.5–89.

<sup>84</sup> Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 25; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 60; Davila, *Descenders*, 152.

Enoch puts it, ‘everything’ there is to know in heaven and on earth (2 *En.* 40.1–4 [J]; cf. 23.3, 6[J]).

Moreover, while 2 *En.* states that Enoch’s experience is unequivocally bodily (1.6–7), HZ seems to imply this of the Yored. For it never describes the experience as a dream or vision. And there is a general assumption in Hekhalot lore that the experiences of heaven are not mere spiritual in nature. In particular, in Enochic lore Enoch receives God’s glory as clothing and becomes radiant like the ‘glorious ones’ around him (2 *En.* 22.8–10; 3 *En.* 15). While God’s glory does not enrobe the Yoredim from the outside, it does inundate them from the inside out. Upon encountering God directly, then, the hero of each work undergoes transformation both *by* and *into* the quasi-material, glorious composition of which God is made.

### 2.3.2 WALKING ON/IN/THROUGH RIVERS OF FIRE

The Yored experiences such a change that he or she is now able ‘to walk on/in/through rivers of fire’ (למהלכה בנהר־י נורא). ‘Rivers of fire’ are interesting. They were common in early Jewish mystical lore, probably extending back to the נהר־י־נור in Dan 7.10. They continued into the apocalypticism of the Second Temple period (1 *En.* 14.19; *Apoc. Pet.* 5.8–9) and then into later rabbinic writings (*b. Hag.* 13b; cf. *Gen Rab.* 78.1).<sup>85</sup>

#### 2.3.2.1 THE ONTOLOGY OF THE RIVER OF FIRE

In HL the river of fire is generally found near or inside the various hekhalot, serving a number of purposes in heaven.<sup>86</sup> One purpose of the

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<sup>85</sup> On the ‘river of fire’, see Kirsti B. Copeland, ‘Sinners and Post-Mortem “Baptism” in the Acherusian Lake’, in *The Apocalypse of Peter* (SECA 7; eds. J.M. Bremmer and I. Czechasz; Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 91–107 [94–5]; Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 199–201; Peter Schäfer, ‘In Heaven as it is in Hell’, in *Heavenly Realms*, 233–74 [271].

<sup>86</sup> On נהר־י־נור, see Schäfer, *Konkordanz*, 449; cf. Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 118; Schäfer, *Hidden*, 26–

river of fire is its role in the creation, destruction and re-creation of the angels ministering before God (*b. Hag.* 14a).<sup>87</sup> This is pertinent to our study primarily for what it suggests about the ontological composition of the ministering angels in heaven. Because they emerge from the fiery rivers, their composition is almost certainly the same as that of the rivers, namely, heavenly fire. In fact, HR 184 states overtly that the angels as ‘cloth[e] themselves with fire’ (cf. HR 204–18; MM 555). For those whose ontological make-up is anything less, heavenly fire leads to sure destruction (HR 119–20; cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 31; *Sib. Or.* 5.173).

Another purpose of the heavenly river of fire is to provide an obstacle for those trying to enter each hekhal. According to MM 546, the rivers are like ‘bridges’ and guard the hekhalot from the Yoredim seeking entry (HZ 356; MM 545–6; *1 En.* 14.19; *3 En.* 22).<sup>88</sup> In a similar vein, HZ reports that those who are unworthy to descend the Merkavah are thrown into the rivers of fire (HZ 407–12).<sup>89</sup> Being unworthy ultimately prevents the Yored from being changed and enabled to withstand the fires of heaven.

HR offers a helpful description of the Yored’s perilous journey to God’s throne that is not found in HZ:

And all the descenders to the chariot ascend and are not harmed; rather they see all this violence and descend safely and they come and stand and testify to the fearsome and confounding sight, the like of which is not in all the palaces of kings of flesh and blood (HR 215, trans. James Davila).<sup>90</sup>

This text raises a point that is almost comical. When we consider the ontological gap separating God from his angels, it seems almost trivial to compare the new ontological properties of the Yored to those of the

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7, 79; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (BRS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 [1984]), 53–4.

<sup>87</sup> Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 158–9.

<sup>88</sup> Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 20, 67–76; Arbel, *Beholders*, 81–2.

<sup>89</sup> On Rigyon, see Halperin, *Faces*, 296–7; Kuyt, *Descent*, 237; Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (vol. 3; Philadelphia: JPS, 1911), 112.

<sup>90</sup> Davila, *Descenders*, 266.



angels. For the Yored has been re-made of God's own glory. The ontological composition of the Yored is so much greater than that of the fiery rivers that they can hardly be called an obstacle.

#### 2.3.2.2 WALKING ON DRY LAND

A corollary to the Yored's ability to walk on or through rivers of fire is that of being able 'to walk on dry land' (לַמְּהֻלָּא בִּיבְשָׁתָא, HZ 349).<sup>91</sup> This image may indeed clarify both the nature and the role of the heavenly river of fire. By referencing 'dry land', HZ may be alluding to the Israelites' standing on dry land after crossing the Red Sea (Exod 14.22) and Jordan River (Josh 3.15–17; 2 Kgs 2.8). HZ 342–3 states, in fact, that Moses made use of the Name to part the Red Sea. HZ 349 may be saying that the Yored, having walked across the rivers of fire, arrives at something of a heavenly *promised land*: the highest hekhal where God resides.

#### 2.3.2.3 THE EXAMPLE OF RABBI AQIVA

R. Aqiva's own suprabodily change offers a further glimpse into the nature of that of the Yored. As the prototype of the aspiring Yored, it is important to note what R. Aqiva says about his own experience in heaven. Details concerning his experience would seem to apply to some degree to others following his instructions.

As he recalls, during his journey to heaven and vision of the Merkavah:

I looked out (צִפִּייה) and observed the whole inhabited world and saw it as it is. I ascended in a wagon made of fire (בַּעֲגֵלָא מִן נֹרָא) and gazed (וַאֲסִתְבִּלִּית) on the hekhalot of hail. And I found GRWSQ<sup>3</sup> GRWSQ<sup>3</sup> sitting on the burning sea (HZ 366).<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 288.

<sup>92</sup> Text follows N8128 and O1531.

R. Aqiva ascended in a ‘wagon made of fire’ (בעגלא מן נורא) and witnessed the one he calls GRWSQ’ GRWSQ’ sitting on the fiery sea.<sup>93</sup> Morray-Jones is absolutely correct that R. Aqiva’s experience ‘would hardly be possible in an ordinary body’.<sup>94</sup> Like R. Aqiva, the Yored must—and when the conditions are right, does—undergo an ontological-compositional change such that he or she can likewise withstand the fiery substance of heaven.

Having been transformed by and saturated in God’s glory, becoming like him ontologically, the Yored can now stand before him and praise him freely. Davila aptly explains that the Yored now ‘operates in an angelic body’ and ‘gains incantatory and visionary powers along with a new, fiery nature’.<sup>95</sup> We cannot say for certain that the Yored’s new body is ‘angelic’ in the sense that he or she has *become* an angel. We can safely conclude, however, that this new body is like the heavenly elements, having taken possession of the suprahuman capability to thrive in the otherwise destructive fiery environment of heaven.

### 2.3.3 YOREDIM AS SUPERSENSORY CREATURES

We noted above that a cursory reading of HZ 335, 340 and 348–50 leaves the impression that the Yored experiences further change in his or her *ocular* and *cognitive* faculties.<sup>96</sup> In HZ 348–50 alone we find four different terms having to do with sight and/or cognition, including סכל (‘gaze upon’), חזא (‘behold’), צפי (‘look out’) and ראה (‘see’). The dual notion of vision and cognition in HZ 348–50 demands special attention at this point. An investigation of the four sight words thus seems a natural place to begin.

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<sup>93</sup> Davila, *Descenders*, 153 n. 60.

<sup>94</sup> Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 24.

<sup>95</sup> Davila, *Descenders*, 153.

<sup>96</sup> Kuyt, *Descent*, 375.

### 2.3.3.1 To GAZE (סכל)

According to HZ 349–50, the Yored is now ‘able’ (יכול) ‘to gaze upon his [God’s] splendour’ (למיסתכלא בזייה).<sup>97</sup> The sight word in this line, סכל (‘gaze’) appears over a dozen times in HZ alone. It generally describes ‘gazing upon’ something with an heir of speculation and being able to ‘comprehend’ what is being seen.<sup>98</sup> It is worth noting that, although similar, the Aramaic סכל and its derived forms differ slightly from the Hebrew שכל and its derivatives. Both signify gazing, contemplation and comprehension, but there is an element of speculation—even an element of mysterium—inherent in סכל that is not present in שכל.<sup>99</sup> HZ 337, for example, explains that when R. Aqiva ‘was gazing upon Ma’aseh Merkavah’ (שהיה מסתכל במעשה מרכבה),<sup>100</sup> he learned the Name which would enable other Yoredim to enter heaven (cf. HZ 366). He recalls that, having travelled through the heavenly height (במרום) and placed signs on the many entrances of Raqia, he arrived finally at the Pargod. Immediately angels of destruction (מלאכי חבלה) came out to destroy him. God stopped them, however, declaring, ‘Leave this elder alone, because he is worthy to gaze upon my glory’ (ראוני להסתכל בכבודי, HZ 346).<sup>101</sup> Being worthy, presumably by making proper use of the Name, among other things, enables one ‘to gaze upon [God’s] glory’. The sense here is surely visionary, but it may have something to do with cognition as well.

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<sup>97</sup> The splendour (זי) of Shekhinah is important in chapter seven.

<sup>98</sup> On סכל, see Schäfer, *Konkordanz*, 483; Jastrow 990–1.

<sup>99</sup> Jastrow 990–1 (סכל), 1574 (שכל)

<sup>100</sup> Text follows O1531.

<sup>101</sup> While this text is not found in the other MSS, it reappears in MR 673 in O1531 and N8128.

Elsewhere in HZ, in describing the Hayyot R. Aqiva remarks that ‘when they want to behold, they behold forward, towards the East. And when they want to gaze, they gaze, but not behind them, not towards the West’ (HZ 355).<sup>102</sup> The West is the direction of the Holy of Holies. The Hayyot thus refuse to look in God’s direction, certainly out of reverence, but perhaps also out of fear of being destroyed. As HR 159–60 expresses, ‘the one gazing upon him [God] (הַמַּסְתַּכֵּל בּוֹ) will immediately be torn’, and those who see him every day reap the harmful effects of his radiance (cf. HR 102, 104).<sup>103</sup> The angels are no doubt aware of the destructive powers of God’s radiance.

However, there seems to be a different value placed on humans who seek the vision of God properly. Humans, not angels, may ‘gaze upon’ God in a way that angels cannot. As R. Ishmael later explains, purity is critical for anyone desiring to ‘descend and gaze’ (יֵוֶרֵד וּמַסְתַּכֵּל) on the Lord (HR 200). We are also told, ‘Happy is the eye feeding itself and gazing upon the light from this wonderful light—this wonderful and very strange vision’ (HR 160).<sup>104</sup>

There is an interesting paradox taking place here. On the one hand, the Hayyot do not look towards the Holy of Holies (so HZ 355). For those surrounding God’s throne become ‘darkened’ from the divine radiance (so HR 160). On the other hand, God declares R. Aqiva to be ‘worthy’ (רָאוּי) to ‘gaze upon’ him (HZ 346). R. Nehunhya b. Haqanah is likewise said to be ‘worthy to gaze upon the King and his throne, upon his glory and upon his beauty’ (HR 198; cf. 297).<sup>105</sup> The point is this: the Yored has access to God that not even the angels have. This strengthens a point we made above, namely, that the ontological composition of the Yored’s body surpasses that of the angels. It follows that his or her visionary-cognitive capabilities are superior to theirs as well.

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<sup>102</sup> Text follows N8128 and O1531.

<sup>103</sup> Schäfer, *Hidden*, 16–17.

<sup>104</sup> Text follows O1531.

<sup>105</sup> Text follows N8128.

### 2.3.3.2 To BEHOLD (חזו)

The Yored has also become able to behold the vision of the dead' (ולמחזו) (חזו, HZ 349).<sup>106</sup> חזו ('behold') appears in HZ some 30 times, generally with an emphasis on the experience of vision (see esp. HZ 352; 356). In the HB and RL, חזו likewise refers to the experience of 'beholding' divine things, including prophetic visions and theophanies (Exod 18.21; Isa 1.1; Ezek 12.27; Dan 2.26; Amos 1.1; Mic 1.1). In Exod 24.11, to give an important example, we read simply, 'And they [Moses and company] beheld God and ate and drank' (ויחזו את־האלהים ויאכלו) (וישאו).<sup>107</sup> In Ps 63.2(3) the psalmist boasts similarly, 'Thus in the holy [place] I have beheld (חזיתוך) you [Lord], to see (לראות) your power and your glory' (my trans.). And in Isa 33.17 we find the statement 'Your eyes will *behold* the King in his beauty' (מלך ביפיו תחזינה עיניך) (my trans.). The Hekhalot mystics adopted this verse as a mystical refrain, altering it slightly, as we shall see in §2.3.3.5 below. In short, חזו signifies the twofold experience of 'vision' and 'comprehension', and this in a largely mystical sense rather than mundane sight or cognition (cf. *b. Ber.* 17b; 45a; *b. Erub.* 14b; *b. Git.* 57a; *b. Ta'an.* 25b.).

### 2.3.3.3 To LOOK OUT, PEER AT (צפי)

The term צפי ('look out', 'peer at') appears twice in HZ 349. Like the previous two sight words, צפי describes a super-sensual vision rather than ordinary sight. It signifies being able to see far away, both spatially and temporally, and to peer into matters otherwise beyond normal

<sup>106</sup> D. Vetter, 'חזו', *TLOT* 400–3; BDB 302a.

<sup>107</sup> On Exod 24.11, see chapter seven below.

human abilities.<sup>108</sup> In fact, R. Aqiva himself claims to have obtained the ability to ‘look out and observe the whole inhabited world . . . as it was’ (HZ 346).

In MM 547 we learn of the ‘prayer of mercy’ (תפילת רחמים) by which R. Aqiva became ‘able to peer at’ (יכול לצפות) the heavenly sights and mysteries (cf. MM 595). Later in MM 565 the question is asked, ‘Who is able to peer at PDQRS, angel of the face?’<sup>109</sup> Because R. Ishmael is given wisdom (חכמה) in his heart, he is deemed ‘able to peer at’ (יוכל לצפות) the fierce being. And MM 570 expresses that by ‘pray[ing] the prayer with all his strength’, the seeker will be ‘able to peer at the splendour of the Shekhinah (לצפות בזיו השכינה)’. For he or she has been declared ‘beloved of the Shekhinah’ and given ‘power’ to ‘peer (לצפות) and not be harmed’ (cf. MM 591; 592).<sup>110</sup> In short, צפ’ refers to the mystical vision available to the visionary who has, more than likely, gained possession of superhuman cognition, which is almost certainly in HZ 349 (cf. 3 En. 1; HR 218; 225; 287; 294; 303; MM 554; 579; 595; MR 662).

#### 2.3.3.4 TO SEE (ראה)

Through its use of Scripture, HZ 350 uses the term ראה (‘see’) in implying that the Yored is now able to ‘see [God] and live’ (‘יראני האדם וחי’), so Exod 33.20—HZ 350) This term is used in biblical and non-biblical literature in reference to ‘seeing’ or ‘taking note of’ something.<sup>111</sup> Many instances of the term are wholly non-mystical (Exod 3.7, 9; 19.4; 20.22; Lev 13; cf. Neh 9.9), though ראה does carry a mystical sense as well. This is often the sense when used in reference to seeing visions of angels (Jdgs

<sup>108</sup> Jastrow 1296–7.

<sup>109</sup> Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 91–101, 149–56, 237.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 46, 61–2.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. D. Vetter, ‘ראה’, *TLOT* 1176–83; BDB 906a.

6.22; 1 Sam 28.13; Dan 9.21) or God (Jdgs 13.22; 1Kgs 22.19; Isa 66.18). The prophets, especially Ezekiel, employ **רָאָה** in reference to the prophetic vision (Isa 6.5; Jer 4.23–6; Ezek 1.1, 4, 15, 27, 28). This meaning of **רָאָה** carried into rabbinic thinking as well (*b. Ber.* 7a on Exod 33), though it also appears to denote ‘reflecting upon’ or ‘considering’ (*b. B. Bat.* 83a).

**רָאָה** takes on a mystical-visionary significance in HL more than in other strands of ancient Judaism. In one example, R. Ishmael reports that in heaven, he ‘saw (**וַיִּרְאֶה**) the companies of ministering angels’ (HR 124–5). While burning a whole offering on the altar some time later, he claims that he ‘saw Akhtariel Yah the Lord of Hosts sitting upon a throne high and exalted’ (HR 151). In the Ḥagigah-Pardes unit of HZ 338–9, 344–6, Ben Azzai is said to have ‘looked’ (**וַיַּבְחִין**) into the sixth Hekhal, where he ‘saw’ (**וַיִּרְאֶה**) the ‘splendour’ (**וַיִּבֹרֵק**) of the air of the marble stones of which the Hekhal is made (HZ 345; cf. HZ 410). Many more examples could be presented in discussing the meaning of **רָאָה** in HL (HR 81; 97; 124–25; 169; 216–25; HZ 350; 407–11; MM 545–56; 580–95; MR 704). Perhaps the most important occurrences of **רָאָה** are found in §§407–12 of HZ, to which we turn presently.

### 2.3.3.5 TO SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

As noted above, Isa 33.17 became an important mystical refrain in HL. Recall that in Scripture this verse reads, ‘Your eyes will *behold* the King in his beauty’ (**מֶלֶךְ בִּיפְיוֹ תַחֲזִינָה עֵינֶיךָ**).<sup>112</sup> It is interesting that although HL adopts and redeploys this verse as a reference to the mystical vision, it often substitutes the sight word chosen by Isaiah with another of our four sight words. Thus whereas the HB uses **חָזַה** to describe the visionary

<sup>112</sup> Text of the HB is from Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph (eds.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

action, HL uses the verb **רָאָה** to do so.<sup>113</sup> In HL, then, certain individuals are privileged ‘to see (**לִרְאוֹת**) the King in his beauty’ rather than as Scripture asserts to ‘behold’ (**חִזֶּה**) him. The scribes seem to have seen **רָאָה** as better conveying the visionary experience available to the worthy Yored.

The Rabbis used this phrase in mystical contexts as well (but see *b. Yoma* 78b; *b. Ta’an.* 17a; *b. Sanh.* 22b). In *Exod Rab.* 25.8, for example, it is taken as proof that Moses earned the privilege to ‘see’ (**רָאָה**) the ‘beauty’ (**יוֹפִי**) of the Lord ‘face to face’ (**פְּנִים אֶל פְּנִים**; cf. *Gen Rab.* 48.6).

Likewise, *Lev Rab.* 23.13 contains an explicit example of this refrain in a discussion about what it takes to obtain a vision of Shekhinah:

We find that anyone who sees (**שָׂרָאָה**) a naked part of the body and does not feast his eyes on it (**וְאֵינוּ זֶן עֵינָיו מִמֶּנָּה**), he is privileged to welcome the face of Shekhinah (**לְהַקְבִּיל פְּנֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה זֹכָה**). What is the reason? ‘And his eyes close from seeing (**מִרְאוֹת**) evil’ (*Isa* 33.15). What is written next? ‘Your eyes shall behold the King in his beauty (**בִּיפְיוֹ תִחְזֶה עֵינֶיךָ**). They shall see a distant land’ (*Isa* 33.17).

The thrust of this remark is that to ‘feast one’s eyes’ (**זֶן עֵינָיו**) on another’s nudity is to make oneself impure. To avoid doing so, however, is to demonstrate one’s purity and to prove one’s worthiness to have Shekhinah come near.<sup>114</sup> Having Shekhinah near is synonymous with having a vision of the ‘king in his beauty’.

As noted above, the refrain can be found a dozen times in HZ 407–12 alone. In every case in this unit, it has overt mystical connotations. To

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<sup>113</sup> Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 94; cf. Schäfer, *Hidden*, 16–17; Ira Chernus, ‘Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism’, *JSJ* 13 (1982): 123–47; Martha Himmelfarb, ‘Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature’, *HUCA* 59 (1988): 73–100 [74]; Kuyt, *Descent*, 4–5; Rebecca Lesses, ‘Amulets and Angels: Visionary Experience in the Testament of Job and the *Hekhalot* Literature’, in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism* (SJSJ 119; eds. L. LiDonnici and A. Lieber; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 49–74 [67].

<sup>114</sup> On **פְּנֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה** see Arnold M. Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Schekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (SJ 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 292–3.



‘see the King in his beauty’ is another way of describing the direct visionary encounter with God on his Merkavah. The point of this segment is to distinguish between the one who is ‘worthy’ and the one who is ‘not worthy’ to ‘see the King in his beauty’. The job of the angel guarding the sixth hekhal, in which the pericope is set, is to determine

from (among) the Yordei Merkavah—between the one who is worthy (רָאוּי) to see the King in his beauty (לִרְאוֹת אֶת מֶלֶךְ בְּיוֹפִיּוֹ) and the one who is unworthy (שְׂאִינֵי רָאוּי) to see the King in his beauty (לִרְאוֹת אֶת מֶלֶךְ בְּיוֹפִיּוֹ), HZ 407).<sup>115</sup>

The next two sections entertain options as to what makes one worthy or unworthy, and what implications such status has on the aspiring Yored (HR 102).<sup>116</sup>

HZ 411 then moves the setting from the sixth to the seventh hekhal. Here the ‘doubled wheel’ (וְאוֹפֵן כַּפּוֹל) declares, ‘Anyone who is worthy to see the King in his beauty, may he be brought in and see’ (cf. HZ 346).<sup>117</sup> This seems to mark the moment when the Yored becomes ‘worthy’ (רָאוּי), and not just ‘able’ (יָכוֹל, HZ 349, 350), to obtain the vision of God on the Merkavah—that lofty goal set forth in HZ 335. We then read in HZ 411–12:

411 And if he were [‘worthy’], the wheels of power embrace him and the Keruvim of glory kiss him and the Hayyot lift him and the Noga dance before his face and the Hashmal sing, and a spirit of living splendour lifts him until they lift him and seat him before the throne of glory (כִּסֵּא כְבוֹד).

412 And he gazes and sees the King in his beauty (מִסְתַּכֵּל וְרוֹאֶה אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ) (בְּיוֹפִיּוֹ)—the hidden king, the kindly king, the benign king, the perfect king, the gracious king, the righteous king, the holy king, the supreme king, the pure king, the blessed king, the beloved king, the comely king, the king who is desired, the king who is worshipped, the king who is praised, the powerful king, the mighty

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<sup>115</sup> Text follows D436.

<sup>116</sup> Rachel Elior, ‘The Concept of God in Hekhalot Literature’, in *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Binah 2; ed. Joseph Dan; New York: Praeger, 1989), 97–120 [107].

<sup>117</sup> Text follows O1531.

king, the terrible king, the innocent king, the solitary king, the distinguished king—him and all his ministers. And this is his glory (וזהו כבודו).<sup>118</sup>

This text describes the experience of descent as one in which the Yored ‘gazes and sees the King in his beauty—the hidden king . . . him and all his ministers’ (HZ 412; cf. HR 247–9). The Yored, having been seated before God on his throne, is now therefore capable of ‘gazing at’ (מסתכל) and ‘seeing’ (ורואה) the Lord in all his glory.

#### 2.3.4 TRANSFORMED VISION AND COGNITION

In the experience of descent to the Merkavah, vision and cognition thus go hand in hand. It goes without saying that the visionary enterprise is futile if the Yored cannot understand what he or she sees. Thus the Yored is able ‘to gaze upon his splendour’ (למיסתכלא בזויה), ‘to look out from above’ and ‘below’ (למיצפי לעילא . . . לתחא), ‘to behold the vision of the dead’ (ולמחזי בחזות מתייא), and to ‘explain’ (לפרוש), ‘behold’ (לחזוי) and ‘see’ (יראני) God on his Merkavah (Exod 33.20; Isa 6.1). This very experience is the culmination of the Yored’s heavenly journey (HZ 411–12).

Scholarship has weighed in on just this matter, providing helpful analysis of the visionary-cognitive nature of the experience of descent. Vita Daphna Arbel, for example, takes note of the Yored’s newly acquired ability to *exegete* the heavenly visions. ‘Cultivated and achieved through inner experiences and spiritual development’, Arbel explains, ‘a transformation in awareness and consciousness enables the adepts of the Merkavah to behold meanings of divine secrets as their human perception matches that of the divine’.<sup>119</sup> It is Arbel’s view that upon being changed,

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<sup>118</sup> Text is a composite of M22, 01531 and N8128. English translation of the list of attributes follows that of Morray-Jones, ‘Hekhalot Zutarti’, 294.

<sup>119</sup> Arbel, *Beholders*, 102; cf. Eilior, ‘Concept’, 113.

the Yored obtains perceptive abilities similar to those of the angels in heaven.

She further observes that this 'enhanced perception and vision' enables the Yored not only to see God but to perceive him:<sup>120</sup>

Following a change of consciousness, the descenders to the Merkavah experience the effect of the inner transformation on a cognitive-spiritual level . . . This enlightened mode enables qualified mystics to behold visions of the divine, which are normally concealed from all eyes. They understand masked truths and interpret revelations correctly.<sup>121</sup>

Transformed sight enables humans to behold God. Transformed cognition allows them to understand what they see.

What we then find in HZ is a Yored who is now capable of understanding what he or she sees without the help of an angelic mediator. Indeed, this phenomenon, which Arbel calls 'mystical exegesis', is unique to HL.<sup>122</sup> Elsewhere in ancient Jewish tradition, angels are generally sent to explain to the humans what the humans are seeing or being shown in heaven.<sup>123</sup> In HL, however, the emphasis lies on the 'humanly attained mystical perception'.<sup>124</sup> Arbel further remarks:

Divine revelations and visions are not elucidated by an angelic messenger or by divine inspiration. Instead, they are deciphered by human descenders to the chariots who complete their journey, gain 'an understanding of the heart', transcend limited human apprehension, and acquire an enlightened perspective. Then, for a short time, their human perception and divine reality correspond.<sup>125</sup>

Elior takes this a step further when she writes, 'At the height of the mystic descent to the chariot, at the moment of transformation from a sensory to

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<sup>120</sup> Arbel, *Beholders*, 47.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid 48.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid; Elior, 'Concept', 114; Wolfson, *Speculum*, 85. Primary examples might include Dan 7.10, 16; *Apoc. Abr.* 10; *Jos. Asen.* 14–17; *1 En.* 15.2; 40.6; 99.3; *3 Bar.* 11–16; *T. Levi* 3.5; *L.A.B.* 15.5; Tob 12.12; Rev 1.1; 10.9; 19.9. For further references see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2.70; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 179–200

<sup>124</sup> Arbel, *Beholders*, 48.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

a supersensory creature, the mystic achieves a passive vision of the heavenly pageant unmediated by the senses or critical thought'.<sup>126</sup> Not only are angelic mediators absent from the Yored's heavenly experience in HZ, but his or her natural senses become *superhuman*. The Yored comes to possess a visionary-cognitive apparatus equivalent to—or more accurately, greater than—that of other beings in heaven. He or she becomes a 'supersensory creature' who can now see and comprehend an otherwise 'hidden' God (so HZ 352).<sup>127</sup>

## 2.4 A SUMMARY OF HEKHALOT-MYSTICAL ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

In HZ the human is a holistic creature. There is no clear demarcation between the inner and outer parts of the human (NS). The desire to access God directly, perhaps due to the missing Temple or to some other trial facing the Jewish people in late antiquity, motivates the experience set forth in HZ (P<sup>1</sup>). Intensive ascetic disciplines, coupled with focused engagement in Torah matters, lead one towards the DHE (P<sup>2</sup>). The encounter between the Yored and God begins with the human advance towards God (DHE: HA) but culminates in a mutual advance, where God enters the Yored's body (DHE: MA). The Yored takes in God's presence the same way one takes in wine, only in this case the experience is one of ocular imbibing. In a most fascinating event, the divine *Lichtstoff* destroys the Yored's natural ontological composition, reconstructing it into something altogether new (*Mix* Σ). Except for the eyes (Centri*F*), the human is a highly centripetal creature (Centri*P*). Much bodily discipline is required in order to achieve the mystical experience. The divine *Lichtstoff* thus enters the Yored's body through the mystical vision and once inside effects ontological change throughout his or her entire body. The resultant change is one in which the Yored becomes an altogether

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<sup>126</sup> Elior, 'Concept', 114.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid; Arbel, *Beholders*, 48.

superhuman creature, whose ontological composition is apparently greater than that of the angels in heaven (MT: BH).

## 2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The chief concern of HZ is to instruct the aspiring Yored on how to descend the Merkavah and enjoy all that comes with this experience. HZ 348–50 offers a summary portrait of the qualities and abilities of this individual. The experience of the divine is a highly visionary-cognitive one. Upon encountering the Glory on his throne, the Yored beholds the divine *Lichtstoff*. This quasi-substance enters through the eyes, proceeds to the mind and disperses throughout the rest of the body, all the while reconfiguring the Yored in such a way that he or she becomes a superhuman, supersensory being.

While many important questions have yet to find answers from our analysis, one thing is certain: glorious ontological transformation is critical for those aspiring to descend the Merkavah. And it affects not merely the human soul or spirit, but the entire human creature. We shall set the findings of this chapter aside for the moment only to return to them in chapter eight, where we formulate a preliminary ontoanthropology of ancient Judaism. Let us turn now to a second representative of Genus 2 in Philo Judaeus.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE END OF HUMANITY *DE OPIFICIO MUNDI* 144 AS AN ONTO-TELEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

#### 3.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

Having explored the ontoanthropology of Hekhalot-Mystical Judaism (Species 2A), we turn now to an examination of that of Greek-Philosophical Judaism (Species 2B). As a representative of this variety we have chosen Philo Judaeus, whose thoughts on human mutability and mystical change will prove indispensable to our exploration. In Philo, as in Hekhalot mysticism, we will see the especially *individualistic* type of mystical change.

Philo will prove to be a valuable representative of Genus 2 (Individual Transformation). Philo will offer a more systematic presentation of his *ontoanthropology* as compared to Hekhalot mysticism. But like HZ, there are instances in which Philo too offers a step-by-step programme aimed to lead others to the encounter with God and experience of ontological change.

##### 3.1.1 PHILO JUDAEUS

Philo Judaeus lived in Alexandria, Egypt, sometime between 15 B.C.E. and 50 C.E.<sup>1</sup> Rather little is known about him, and it is beyond the scope of our study to offer a reconstruction of the *historical Philo*. It may be that there are more ancient references to Philo's brother, Julius Gaius Alexander the Alabarch, than to Philo himself (Jos. *BJ* 5.201–5; *AJ* 18.159, 259; 19.276–7; 20.100).<sup>2</sup> We know that like his brother Philo was a well-educated Jew of relatively high-standing among Jewish communities in

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<sup>1</sup> David Winston, 'Philo and the Contemplative Life', in *Jewish Spirituality, Volume 1* (WS 13; ed. A. Green; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 198–231.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, 'Philo, His Family, and His Times', in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (CCP; ed. A. Kamesar; Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 9–31 [12–14].

Alexandria (*Congr.* 74–6; *Legat.* 1; *Jos. Ant.* 18.259–60; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 11).<sup>3</sup>

Of primary importance is whether or not Philo was a ‘mystic’. This matter has been the subject of scholarly debate for well over a century.<sup>4</sup> Two of the more influential scholars of the twentieth century have offered rather divergent answers to the question. On the one hand is Erwin Goodenough, who understood Philo as a mystic. He saw Philo’s Judaism as a convergence between his biblical faith and the Hellenistic mystery religions of his day, the result of which was a religion that is mystical at its core.<sup>5</sup> At the heart of this Philonic brand of Judaism lay an experience of ‘ascent higher and ever higher in the Streaming Light-Life of God’.<sup>6</sup> For Philo, in Goodenough’s view, to be saved was to be freed from the body and thereby to obtain immortality.<sup>7</sup> Goodenough’s articulation of Philo has found strong support among scholars.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand is Harry Wolfson.<sup>9</sup> Like Goodenough, Wolfson too recognised the vast deposit of Hellenistic language in Philo’s writings.<sup>10</sup> But Wolfson did not take this language as evidence that Philo

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<sup>3</sup> On the *historical Philo*, see *ibid.*; David M. Hay, ‘Philo’s View of Himself as an Exegete: Inspired but not Authoritative’, *SPA* 3 (1991): 40–52; Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for His Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 14–29.

<sup>4</sup> Borgen, *Exegete*, 1–13.

<sup>5</sup> Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (Amsterdam: Philo, 1969 [1935]), 1–10, 235–64. Cf. Borgen, *Exegete*, 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 263–4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, 169, 202, 400–01.

<sup>8</sup> See the survey by David Winston, ‘Was Philo a Mystic?’, in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism: Proceedings of Regional Conferences Held at the University of California, Los Angeles and McGill University in April, 1978* (eds. J. Dan and F. Talmage; Cambridge, Mass.: AJS, 1982), 15–39. Cf. *idem*, ‘Philo’s Mysticism’, *SPA* 8 (1996): 74–82; Elliot R. Wolfson, ‘Traces of Philonic Doctrine in Medieval Jewish Mysticism: A Preliminary Note’, *SPA* 8 (1996): 99–106; Samuel Sandmel, ‘Philo’s Environment and Philo’s Exegesis’, *JBR* 22 (1954): 248–53; *idem*, *Philo’s Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* (New York: KTAV, augm. ed., 1971), 210–12; *idem*, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1979), 88; Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (NovTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 177; April D. DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (VCSup 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 34–7.

<sup>9</sup> Harry Austyn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (SGSPS 2; 2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1947). See also the critical review by Erwin R. Goodenough, ‘Wolfson’s Philo’, *JBL* 67 (June 1948): 87–109.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfson, *Philo*, 1.93–5.

was creating some type of mystical Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>11</sup> Philo always remained a Pharisaic Jew. As a man of his day, however, he communicated his Judaism using the language salient among his Hellenistic contemporaries.<sup>12</sup> Wolfson held that it was not Hellenism which then turned Philo's Judaism into a Jewish mystery religion, though Philo did create a more philosophical variety of Judaism, and laid the foundation for later Jewish, Christian and Muslim thought.<sup>13</sup>

There are other views of Philo. Some scholars, for example, situate him within a Gnostic milieu, though this view has not gained much acceptance.<sup>14</sup> Others have argued that Philo was indebted to the various cults of his day, including the Egyptian cults and as we have noted the Graeco-Roman mysteries.<sup>15</sup> Still a growing number of others place Philo within the context of Middle Platonism.<sup>16</sup> Then there are those, including Peder Borgen and Valentin Nikiprowetzky, who see Philo primarily as an exegete.<sup>17</sup> Although Borgen does not exclude the view of Philo as somewhat mystical or as having Middle-Platonist tendencies, he does hold that Philo's chief concern was always to exegete Scripture faithfully.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1.36–55.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1.13, 46.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 1.114.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (FRLANT 51; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934), 70–121. But see Borgen, *Exegete*, 6–7, for criticism of this view.

<sup>15</sup> On the Egyptian cults, see Émile Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1908), 101–2, 237–49; Josef Pascher, *ΗΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ. der Königsweg zu Wiedergeburt und Vergottung bei Philon von Alexandria* (SGKA 17; Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1931), 53–61. On Graeco-Roman mysteries, see Hans Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen, Band 1, Teil 1: Die vorchristlichen Anschauungen und Lehre von Pneuma und der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1919), 17–18. The latter work discusses πνεῦμα as an *unkörperliche Substanz* (pp. 24–52).

<sup>16</sup> Borgen, *Exegete*, 6–9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid; idem, *Bread*, 99–121; Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: son caractère et sa portée, observations philologiques* (ALGJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 174–6, 236.

<sup>18</sup> On exegesis of Gen 1–3 as an example, see Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (CBQMS 14; Washington, D.C.: CBAA, 1983), 1–19, 177–80; Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament* (SNTSMS 21; Cambridge: CUP, 1973), 139–41.



And Philo is just one witness—albeit a prodigious one—to the expository activities taking place in the synagogues of Alexandria during his lifetime.<sup>19</sup>

Our estimation of Philo is somewhat of a syncretism of those above. Philo's chief goal was to exegete Scripture faithfully. For in Scripture lay the path to achieving life's divinely ordained end. But he also had certain undeniably mystical tendencies. Chief among these is, incidentally, his conception of *Telos*—a notion of critical importance for our study of Philo (see §3.2.4).

#### 3.1.1.1 PHILO'S THOUGHT WORLD

Most important for our study is the shape of Philo's thought world. Adam Kamesar points out that Judaism was of primary concern to Philo, though he had extensive knowledge of the philosophical currents of his day.<sup>20</sup> It was his knowledge of such currents that served as the lens through which he studied Scripture and formulated his thoughts on key philosophical and theological matters.<sup>21</sup>

One specific element critical to understanding Philo is his emphasis on God's transcendence.<sup>22</sup> God is far too great and complex to be understood *literally* (*Spec.* 1.32–50).<sup>23</sup> And although he is a good God,

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<sup>19</sup> Borgen, *Exegete*, 12–13; idem, *Bread*, 99–121; Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire*, 174–6.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Kamesar, 'Introduction', in *Companion to Philo*, 1–5 [1].

<sup>21</sup> David T. Runia, 'Alexandrian and Jew', in *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (CS 332; ed. idem; Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 1–18 [1–3]; Jacob Milgrom, 'Philo the Biblical Exegete', *SPA* 9 (1997): 79–83; John Dillon, 'Reclaiming the Heritage of Moses: Philo's Confrontation with Greek Philosophy', *SPA* 7 (1995): 108–23; Peder Borgen, 'Philo of Alexandria: Reviewing and Rewriting Biblical Material', *SPA* 9 (1997): 37–53.

<sup>22</sup> Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo* (CCWJCW 1.2; Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 28–102; Schäfer, *Origins*, 155–8; Runia, 'Alexandrian', 9; Albert-Kees Geljon, 'Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria', *VC* 59 (May 2005): 152–77 [168–77]; John M. Dillon and Wilhelm H. Wuellner (eds.), *The Transcendence of God in Philo: Some Possible Sources* (PSCCHSHMC; Berkeley, Calif.: The Center, 1975).

<sup>23</sup> Luis Angel Montes-Peral, *Akataleptos theos: der unfassbare Gott* (ALGJ 16; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 148–57; Gerhard Sellin, 'Gotteserkenntnis und Gotteserfahrung bei

he is too great for humans to withstand in their natural state (*Opif.* 21–3).<sup>24</sup> God’s transcendence probably lies behind Philo’s referring to him as ὁ ὢν, or ‘The Existent One’ (*Conf.* 97; cf. LXX Exod 3.14).

Naturally, as an exegete, Philo believed that the primary avenue for knowing and experiencing God is Scripture. Because God is so transcendent, however, one must employ special tactics in order to *get to* him. For Philo, the knowledge and experience of God by means of a literal reading of Scripture was impossible. ‘Allegory’ (ἀλληγορία) thus became the hermeneutic by which Philo attempted to unearth the meaning lying beneath the literal words of Scripture (*Contempl.* 78; *Spec.* 3.178; *Abr.* 217; *QG* 4.196).<sup>25</sup>

### 3.1.1.2 INFLUENCES ON PHILO

Certain thinkers from before and during Philo’s lifetime exerted clear influence on him. Plato is easily the most widely recognised of such influences. His doctrine of assimilation features prominently in Philo’s remarks on the so-called *Telos*, or end, of humanity, as will become clear below. Stoicism also surfaces in Philo’s ideas on this subject. In fact, Philo will at times diverge from his admitted Platonism in favour of Stoicism when, in particular, describing how humans *mix* ontologically with the divine.<sup>26</sup> It should be kept in mind that although other thinkers have

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Philo von Alexandrien’, in *Monotheismus und Christologie: Zur Gottesfrage im hellenistischen Judentum und im Urchristentum* (QD 138; eds. J. Gniska and H.-J. Klauck; Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 17–40; Geljon, ‘Infinity’, 171–2.

<sup>24</sup> Geljon, ‘Infinity’, 171–2.

<sup>25</sup> Winston, ‘Contemplative’, 198–9; cf. Gregory E. Sterling, ‘Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism’, *SPA* 5 (1993): 96–111; Schäfer, *Origins*, 155; Williamson, *Philo*, 144–200; Runia, ‘Alexandrian’, 6; Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa’, *SPA* 20 (2008): 55–99.

<sup>26</sup> On the influence of Plato and Aristotle on Philo, see David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 412–80; idem, ‘Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited’, *SPA* 5 (1993): 112–40; Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., ‘Was Philo a Middle Platonist? Some Suggestions’, *SPA* 5 (1993): 147–50; Winston, ‘Contemplative Life’, 198–231; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University, rev. ed., 1996), 139–83; David T. Runia, ‘Redrawing the Map of Early Middle Platonism: Some Comments on the Philonic

influenced Philo, his thoughts on many matters, including that which we discuss in this chapter, are predominately the product of his own creative genius.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1.2 THE CREATION OF HUMANITY IN SCRIPTURE

Our concern is with what we are calling Philo's *ontoteleological programme*—or how he believes humans can get from where they are presently to where God created them to be. Interestingly, his doctrine of human *Telos* is almost always tied to his doctrine of human *Genesis*. Scripture naturally shapes Philo's thinking on such matters. In particular, the verses that reoccur in discussions on the *Genesis* and *Telos* of humankind are LXX Gen 1.26–7 and 2.7, which are worth quoting in full here at the outset. The first set of verses, Gen 1.26–7, read as follows:<sup>28</sup>

26 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέρον καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν καὶ ἀρχέτωσαν τῶν ἰχθύων τῆς θαλασσίας καὶ τῶν πετεινῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ πάσης τῆς γῆς καὶ πάντων τῶν ἑρπετῶν τῶν ἐρπόντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

27 καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς.

26 Then God said, 'Let us make humankind according to our image and according to likeness, and let them rule the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and the cattle and all the earth and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth'.

27 And God made humankind; according to divine image he made it; male and female he made them (trans. R.J.V. Hiebert).

The second account, Gen 2.7, then reads:

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Evidence', in *Hellenica et Judaica*, 85–104; Abraham P. Bos, 'Philo of Alexandria: A Platonist in the Image and Likeness of Aristotle', *SPA* 10 (1998): 66–86; Mary E. Andrews, 'Paul, Philo, and the Intellectuals' *JBL* 53 (July 1934): 150–66 [158].

<sup>27</sup> Abraham Terian, 'Inspiration and Originality: Philo's Distinctive Exclamations', *SPA* 7 (1995): 56–84; idem, 'Strange Interpolations in the Text of Philo: the Case of *Quaestiones in Exodum*', *SPA* 3 (1991): 320–7; contra Schäfer, *Origins*, 154.

<sup>28</sup> English translations of the LXX are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (eds. A. Pietersma and B.G. Wright; Oxford: OUP, 2007), unless otherwise noted. Translators of particular books are indicated in parentheses.

καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χεῖρ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.

And God formed man, dust from the earth, and breathed into his face a breath of life, and the man became a living being (trans. Hiebert).

For reasons that become clear below, these verses are crucial to our understanding of Philo's ontoteleological programme.

### 3.1.3 *DE OPIFICIO MUNDI*

The primary work we have chosen from the Corpus Philonicum is called *De opificio mundi* ('On the Creation of the World'). As its title indicates, this work is a treatise on the creation of the world. In it Philo exegetes and expounds on the biblical accounts quoted above. He covers many issues pertinent to the creation, but his thoughts on the creation of humanity are of special interest to us.

*De opificio mundi* is comprised of 172 sections, divides into 25 chapter-like portions and follows a basic four-part structure.<sup>29</sup> Philo's introduction to the work takes up the first twelve sections (1–12). The next and largest part concentrates on Gen 1 (13–128), followed by an engagement with Gen 2–3 (129–70a). The conclusion to the work is then quite brief, making up only the last two sections (170b–72).

For one thing, Philo's Platonism comes through clearly in *De opificio mundi* in his dealing with the creation. As a good Platonist, he holds a twofold account of the event. God first created the incorporeal world, including the human mind, and only after that the corporeal world and the human body. Only after both were created did God implant the mind into the body, during the course of which he gave humanity life.

In addition, Philo finds the figures involved in the Fall as an allegorical representation of the human being *in toto*. Adam, in other

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<sup>29</sup> On which, see David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

words, represents the mind, Eve the body and the Serpent pleasure. In its initial state of existence, the mind (Adam) was like God and had nothing but love for him (*Opif.* 69, 134).<sup>30</sup> When God introduced the bodily sensations (Eve), however, he introduced to the mind (Adam) a mechanism that possessed an inherent propensity for pleasure (Serpent). The Serpent (pleasure) thus introduced itself to Eve (the bodily mechanism) and seduced her. Through her (body) the Serpent (pleasure) then made its way to Adam (the mind). From this moment on, the mind and the body became entrenched in a battle in which the pleasures would entice the body in an effort to find their way into the mind and bring it to ruin.<sup>31</sup> It became incumbent on the mind—and remains so to this day—to take the necessary steps to overcome the body and dissuade the pleasures. What takes place when the mind overcomes the body is the *liberation of the mind from the body and pleasures*. The programme Philo offers as to how this occurs and what it entails is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

### 3.2 PHILO'S ONTO-TELEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

Having laid some important groundwork, we are now in a position to give our full attention to Philo's ontoteleological programme. One of the clearest expressions of this programme comes in *De opificio mundi* 144. We should briefly acquaint ourselves with the text and the basic issues and questions that arise from it before moving to a fuller discussion thereafter.

#### 3.2.1 *DE OPIFICIO MUNDI* 144—TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The text effectively divides into three parts: a, b and c. Each relates to one of Philo's three principal concerns, namely, the *Genesis*, liminal state and

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jonathan D. Worthington, *Creation in Paul and Philo: The Beginning of Creation and Before* (WUNT 2.317; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 150.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

*Telos* of humankind (see §3.2.4). Each part will also provide a framework for our own discussion, ‘framing’, as it were, the chief questions to be addressed.

With these preliminary provisos in mind, let us quote our text in full:

144a οὗτοι δὲ τίνες ἂν εἶεν ὅτι μὴ λογικαὶ καὶ θεῖαι φύσεις, αἱ μὲν ἀσώματοι καὶ νοηταί, αἱ δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ σωμάτων, οἵους συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τοὺς ἀστέρας; οἷς προσομιλῶν καὶ συνδιαιτώμενος εἰκότως ἐν ἀκράτῳ διέτριβεν εὐδαιμονίᾳ· συγγενὴς τε καὶ ἀγχίσπορος ὢν τοῦ ἡγεμόνος, ἅτε δὴ πολλοῦ ρυέντος εἰς αὐτὸν τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος,

144b πάντα καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν ἐσπούδαζεν εἰς ἀρέσκειαν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ βασιλέως, ἐπόμενος κατ’ ἵχνος αὐτῷ ταῖς ὁδοῖς, ἃς λεωφόρους ἀνατέμνουσιν ἀρεταί,

144c διότι μόναις ψυχαῖς θέμις προσέρχεσθαι τέλος ἡγουμέναις τὴν πρὸς τὸν γεννήσαντα θεὸν ἐξομοίωσιν.

144a Who else would these be than the rational and divine natures, some of whom are incorporeal and intelligible beings, while others have bodies of the kind that the stars in fact possess? Consorting and having fellowship with these beings, the first man surely passed the time in undiluted well-being. He was closely related and akin to the Director, because the divine spirit had flowed into him in ample measure,

144b and so all his words and actions were undertaken in order to please the Father and King, in whose footsteps he followed along the highways that the virtues mark out,

144c because only those souls are permitted to approach him who consider the goal of their existence to be assimilation to the God who brought them forth (*Opif.* 144).<sup>32</sup>

This pericope does three things that guide the remainder of our study of Philo. First, it makes a link between the created or natural state of humanity (144a) and their end or teleological state of being (144c). Philo’s remark that the one whom these souls approach is the one who ‘brought them forth’ (γεννήσαντα) evinces this link. Second, the pericope

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<sup>32</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Philo’s *De Opificio mundi* are from Runia, *Commentary*. Translations of other works in Philo are those of F.H. Colson, G.H. Whitaker and Ralph Marcus, *Philo in Ten Volumes and Two Supplements* (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1929–53). Greek text of all of Philo’s works is that of Peder Borgen, Kåre Fuglseth and Roald Skarsten, *The Works of Philo: Greek Text with Morphology* (Philo Concordance Project, Logos Research Systems, 2000).

indicates that the means by which humanity are to pursue *Telos* includes, broadly speaking, following in God's footsteps in pursuing virtue. Third, the pericope makes plain that the chief characteristic of this teleological state of being is what Philo calls 'assimilation to the God who brought them forth' (ἡ πρὸς τὸν γεννήσαντα θεὸν ἐξομοίωσις).

### 3.2.2 THE CREATED ONTOLOGICAL STATE (*DE OPIFICIO MUNDI* 144A)

Philo expresses his thoughts in *Opif.* 144a on the ontological relationship humanity shared with God while in their *created state of being*. He describes this in terms of *kinship*. Because he understands the first human, Adam, as symbolic of the human mind, what he says about Adam naturally extends to the rest of the human race (*Opif.* 145–6).

Philo remarks that in its earliest existence the mind lived 'in undiluted well-being' (ἐν ἀκράτῳ διέτριβεν εὐδαιμονίᾳ). During this period of purity, before the body messed things up, as it were, the mind existed in a state of transcendent closeness to God, both ontologically and spatially. Philo calls this relationship συγγένεια (cf. *Opif.* 77), indicating that mind is literally of the same *genos* as God himself.<sup>33</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1 THE DIVINE IMPLANTATION

This συγγένεια stems from God's breathing of his spirit into Adam's face at creation (Gen 2.7). At that moment, God gave a piece of himself to humanity. Whereas Plato viewed humanity in kinship to the heavenly substance (*Tim.* 35a, 41d, 47b, 90a), for Philo, because of this pneumatic inbreathing, humanity is akin to God himself (see *Plant.* 18; *Decal.* 134; cf. Plato *Tim.* 90a).<sup>34</sup> As David Runia explains, 'Man is akin to God because he has received the gift of the rational faculty (*Opif.* 77), because the divine spirit has been breathed into him (*Opif.* 144, exeg. Gen. 2:7), because he

<sup>33</sup> Cf. John Whittaker, 'The Terminology of the Rational Soul in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria', *SPA* 8 (1996): 1–20.

<sup>34</sup> Runia, *Timaeus*, 341.

possesses διάνοια (*Opif.* 146; cf. *Spec.* 4.14; *Praem.* 163; *QG* 2.45, 62; *QE* 2.29).<sup>35</sup> Here and elsewhere Philo makes it clear that because God breathed his 'breath' into humankind, there is at least some aspect of the human creature which possesses divinity.

### 3.2.2.2 THE DIVINITY OF THE MIND

Indeed, the divine inbreathing has primarily impacted the ontological state of the mind (νοῦς). Philo addresses this on several occasions. In discussing this matter, Runia takes special note of the way Philo uses terms like θεῖος or τὸ θεῖον to describe the human being.<sup>36</sup> He then offers the following list:

*Leg.* 2.95: The soul's two kinds of offspring, τὸ θεῖον or τὸ φθαρτόν.

*Det.* 29: Man's διάνοια is τὸ θειότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν.

*Ebr.* 70: We must sever τὸ θεῖον (soul) from τὸ φθαρτόν (body).

*Her.* 84: Man's νοῦς, if serving God in purity, is not ἀνθρώπινος but θεῖος.

*Mut.* 184: God is not a *compound* (σύγκριμα), but we are a *mixture* (συγκεράννυμι) of divine and mortal.

*Somn.* 1.34: Man's νοῦς is an ἀπόσπασμα θεῖον.<sup>37</sup>

Given Philo's 'liberal' understanding of the concept of divinity, as Runia puts it, there appear to exist different *degrees* of divinity.<sup>38</sup> God's divinity is of the highest degree, while that of the mind is of a lesser degree. Both, nevertheless, are *divine*, the latter having derived its divinity from the former.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 332–3; cf. Helleman, 'Assimilation', 51–71.

<sup>37</sup> Runia, *Timaeus*, 333.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



### 3.2.2.2.1 *DE MUTATIONE NOMINUM* 184–85

Let us briefly discuss some of the more important examples in which Philo portrays the mind as divine. In *De mutatione nominum*, for example, he explains that humans are composite beings. They are comprised of mortality and divinity. He states that ‘we’ humans ‘are mixtures, with human [lit.: ‘mortal’] and divine blended in us’ (θείου καὶ θνητοῦ συγκερασθέντων, *Mut.* 184). He goes on to add that of all the parts that make up the human being, the mind is ‘the better and more godlike part’ (ἀμείνω καὶ θειοτέραν μοῖραν, §185).

Philo’s comment in *Mut.* 184 is important for what it reveals about how the mortal and divine *mix together*. In it Philo employs the aorist passive participle of συγκεράννυμι (‘to blend’) to describe the relationship between the ‘divine’ (θεῖος) and ‘mortal’ (θνητός) parts of the human being. He uses the verb in *Opif.* 146 as well, explaining that the human creature *in toto* is a mixture of earth, water, air and fire having been blended (συγκεράννυμι) together (cf. *Virt.* 76; *Spec.* 1.264; *Migr.* 207; *Cher.* 127). The verb is a cognate of the noun κρᾶσις and was a favourite term among the Stoics to describe the way the body and soul were mixed together (see §1.5.4.3).<sup>39</sup> The family of terms basically portrays two entities mixing together to create a single entity, all the while retaining their distinctive ontological states of being.

In Philo’s view, the divine and mortal mix in a way as to interpenetrate one another completely to comprise the whole human creature. But neither loses its original state of being. The soul (or just the mind) and the body are mixed together in a way that the soul is not actually localised in the body (e.g. in the head or chest), as he indicates elsewhere, but is ‘blended’ throughout it.

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<sup>39</sup> Von Staden, ‘Body’, 99–100.

#### 3.2.2.2.2 *QUOD DETERIUS POTIORI INSIDIARI SOLEAT* 29

It appears that either the mind alone is divine, rather than the entire soul, or that the entire soul has a share of divinity, where its different parts are divine in varying degrees.<sup>40</sup> *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* seems to support the view that the entire soul is divine, though the mind is of a greater degree of divinity. Philo explains here that ‘the divinest part of us’ (τὸ θεϊότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν) is ‘our thought’ (τὴν διάνοιαν, *Det.* 29). The superlative form of θεῖος leads one to think that Philo believes there are other things *inside* the human that have a share in the divine, though the mind more so than the rest of the soul.

#### 3.2.2.2.3 *DE SOMNIIS* 1.25–34

In *De Somniis* Philo comments on the four principal ‘elements’ comprising the human being (*Somn.* 1.34). His division includes ‘body, the sense-perception, speech, mind’ (*Somn.* 1.25). He works his way through the first three elements, noting characteristics of each (*Somn.* 1.25–9). He concludes that each is valuable primarily because of the way it affects the fourth element: the mind. The body provides the mind a place of dwelling and protection (*Somn.* 1.26). The senses provide information critical to the mind’s growth, and they too protect it from harm (*Somn.* 1.27). And the voice gives the mind a way of communicating to the outside world (*Somn.* 1.28–9). All of these are valuable, but they are still inferior to the mind.

Of the mind, Philo then asks, ‘Is, then, the fourth element in ourselves, the dominant mind, capable of being comprehended [in the same manner as the other elements]’ (*Somn.* 1.30)? He emphatically answers, ‘By no means’, adding:

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<sup>40</sup> Shulman and Stroumsa, ‘Introduction’, 12–13.

For what do we suppose it to be essentially (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι)? Breath (πνεῦμα) or blood (αἷμα) or body in general (σῶμα συνόλως)? Nay, we must pronounce it no body but incorporeal. Do we regard it as boundary-line (πέρας), or form (εἶδος), or number (ἀριθμὸν), or continuity (ἐνδελέχειαν), or harmony (ἁρμονίαν), or what amongst all that exists (τί τῶν ὄντων, *Somn.* 1.30)?

Philo here declares that the mind is ‘no body’ (οὐ σῶμα), ‘incorporeal’ (ἀσώματον) and that its ‘essence’ (οὐσία) differs starkly from that of the ‘body’ (σῶμα).

This raises the issue about what Philo means when he differentiates between the οὐσία of the mind and that of the body. What we can say about the ontology of the οὐσία is rather limited. The term itself signifies something of the ontological ‘substance’, ‘property’ or ‘essence’ of everything that exists (Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1003b7; Plato, *Phaedo* 92d; *Rep.* 509b; *Tim.* 29c). Everything has an οὐσία unique to itself: creatures have certain types of οὐσία and divinities another. Philo is probably indebted to Plato for his understanding of the οὐσία of the soul. For both conceive of the οὐσία of the soul as incorporeal and immortal (*Phaedrus* 245e; cf. Philo, *Somn.* 1.30). Plato describes οὐσία as the ‘underlying quality’ (ὃ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν) and ‘true nature’ (ἀληθέστατον) of everything in existence (*Phaedo* 65d–e).<sup>41</sup>

In *De Somniis* Philo gives further indication that the mind, as opposed to other parts of the soul, is something of a piece of God himself. As he explains:

For among created things, that which is holy is, in the universe, the heavens, in which natures imperishable and enduring through long ages have their orbits (καθ’ ὃν αἱ ἀφθαρτοὶ καὶ μακράωνες φύσεις περιπολοῦσιν); in man it is mind, a fragment of the Deity (ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ δὲ νοῦς, ἀπόσπασμα θεῖον ὢν), as the words of Moses in particular bear witness, ‘He breathed into his face a breath of life, and man became a living soul’ (Gen 2.7—*Somn.* 1.34).

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<sup>41</sup> Unless otherwise noted, text and translations of Plato’s *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are from Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (LCL 123; ed. and trans. Harold North Fowler; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1966).

The ‘essence’ (οὐσία) and ‘nature’ (φύσις) of the mind are like those of God because the mind is a ‘divine fragment’ (ἀπόσπασμα θεῖον) of God himself. In Philo’s estimation, Gen 2.7 states just that: that by breathing into the human’s face at creation, God actually gave a ‘fragment’ (ἀπόσπασμα) of himself. He makes a claim to this same effect in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* when he states, ‘He [Moses] did not make the substance of the mind depend on anything created, but represented it as breathed upon by God’ (*Her.* 56; cf. *Gig.* 55). Philo points here too to Gen 2.7 as evidence of his view.

### 3.2.2.3 SUMMARY

Philo never states unequivocally *either* that the mind is divine *or* that it is not, as one might wish he would. Even still, we have observed several texts in which Philo portrays the mind as divine, to some degree. This view of the mind aligns nicely with what we have found in *Opif.* 144. In comparing the mind to God, and in linking the *Genesis* of the mind to the inbreathing of the divine spirit of Gen 2.7, Philo leads us safely to the conclusion that *the mind has at least a partial share of God’s divinity*. Its divinity is not equivalent to that of God. But it is something in which no other created being—and not even the other parts of the soul—has a share. Perhaps we should not be surprised to find this in Philo. For Plato had long before him established the understanding that the rational part of the soul (νοῦς) is inherently divine (*Tim.* 41c, 44d, 45a, 69d, 72d, 76b, 88b, 90c).<sup>42</sup>

### 3.2.3 THE LIMINAL ONTOLOGICAL STATE (*DE OPIFICIO MUNDI* 144B)

In *De opificio mundi* 144b Philo makes a remark about humanity in their liminal ontological state. By liminal we mean that state of being located between their created state of 144a and the teleological state of 144c. In

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Runia, *Timaeus*, 332–4.

order to make the transition from the former to the latter, they must follow the path prescribed by God. Philo only provides scant details about what this path looks like in *Opif.* 144b. But what he reveals here offers an entrée into other texts in which he does give more detail.

### 3.2.3.1 THE CONCEPT OF LIMINALITY

French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep first brought the concept of liminality to scholarly attention in his now standard *Les Rites de Passage*.<sup>43</sup> The term ‘liminality’ comes from the Latin *līmen* (‘threshold’) and refers, generally speaking, to that period during which a person is between two states of being—what Victor Turner has designated being ‘betwixt and between’.<sup>44</sup>

Liminality is primarily used in initiatory situations in which rites of passage are present. It refers to the second of three stages of initiation. Having broken free of his or her original state, the person must pass through certain rites in order to arrive at the desired state.<sup>45</sup> The liminal stage encompasses the entire middle period between the individual’s former and future states of being. In this period, the individual is neither here nor there.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1909). Cf. Bjørn Thomassen, ‘The Uses and Meanings of Liminality’, *IPA* 2 (2009): 5–28.

<sup>44</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 13th ed., 2008 [1967]), 59–92. See also idem, ‘The Center Out There: Pilgrim’s Goal’, *HR* 12 (1973): 191–230; idem, ‘Pilgrimage as Social Processes’, in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1974), 166–230; Victor W. Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (LHRNS 11; Oxford: OUP, 1978); Linda Kay Davidson and David M. Gitlitz, ‘Liminality’, in *Pilgrimages: From the Ganges to Graceland: An Encyclopedia, Volume 1, A–L* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 344; Dale F. Eickelman, ‘Pilgrimage’, in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (eds. A. Barnard and J. Spencer; London: Routledge, 2002), 637–8; Hein Viljoen and Chris N. van der Merwe, *Beyond the Threshold: Explorations of Liminality in Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Revisiting Liminality: The Danger of Empty Spaces’, in *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience and Spaces In-Between* (eds. H. Andrews and L. Roberts; London: Routledge, 2012), 21–35.

<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey C. Miller, *The Transcendent Function: Jung’s Model of Psychological Growth through Dialogue with the Unconscious* (Albany: SUNY, 2004), 105; Arpad

### 3.2.3.2 PHILO AND ONTOLOGICAL LIMINALITY

The model of liminality is generally applied to situations involving social transitions. We apply it, however, to Philo's ideas on the transition from one ontological state of being to another. When an individual, out of love for God, commits to breaking free of the body and fleeing the passions, he or she voluntarily enters a state of *ontological liminality*.<sup>47</sup> From here on this individual will come to see life as a unbroken strand of interconnected *rites de passage* which will lead him or her out of that original state of existence (see §3.2.2) and into that state called *Telos* (see §3.2.4) the latter of which entails the experience of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ.

The model of ontological liminality can be summarised as follows:

- (a) *separation* from one's original state of being;
- (b) *progression* through a liminal state of being, during which the individual takes the necessary steps to achieve his or her desired state of being;
- (c) *incorporation* into the new, desired state of being towards which the individual has been striving.

Let us examine our text against the light of this model in the attempt to understand Philo's own ontoteleological programme.

#### 3.2.3.2.1 TO PLEASE AND FOLLOW THE FATHER AND KING

Philo's ontoteleological programme begins with speaking and acting in a manner that 'pleases the Father and King' (*Opif.* 144b). Adam (the mind)

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Szakolczai, 'Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events', *IPA* 2 (2009): 141–72; Jon P. Mitchell, 'Ritual', in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 738–42 [739].

<sup>47</sup> David C. Aune, 'Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity', in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within Greco-Roman World* (CST; ed. W.E. Helleman; Lanham, Md.: UPA, 1994), 125–58 [126–34].

did this in the Garden, and other minds are to follow this path as well. In its earliest state of existence, the mind said what it said and did what it did with the goal of bringing pleasure to God.

### 3.2.3.2.2 THE HIGHWAY OF VIRTUE

Philo adds that the mind pleased God ‘by following in his [God’s] footsteps, his paths, which the highway of virtue cuts out’ (*Opif.* 144b, my trans.).<sup>48</sup> The view of virtue (ἀρετή) as that which paves the way toward happiness (εὐδαιμονία) and other such ‘ends’ had been the view among philosophers long before Philo’s time.<sup>49</sup> The concept of virtue itself is indeed too difficult to define fully at the present.<sup>50</sup> Aristotle and Plato both see virtue as having an *ideal source* in the realm of ideas and a *tangible manifestation* observable in human life. The virtues always come from *virtue* proper and seek the best for others (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1366a36; 1366b5; cf. 1389a; Plato, *Rep* 354b–c, 560d–61a; *Hip. Ma.* 296c–297c; *Meno* 77b).<sup>51</sup>

Philo combines Aristotelian and Platonist ideas on virtue with that of his Judaism (*Abr.* 5–7, 52; *Praem.* 119; *Spec.* 4.134, 179).<sup>52</sup> For Philo, part of what made created humanity so great was their virtue (*Opif.* 3, 136–41).<sup>53</sup> Further still, the *virtue* (ἀρετή) that exists in the ideal world is the source from which the various *virtues* (ἀρεταί) come. The latter include things like courage (*Virt.* 1–50), piety and humanity (51–174), repentance (175–86) and nobility (187–227), as well as godliness,

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Bonazzi, ‘Transcendence’, 249–50. On ‘road’ imagery in Philo, see H.D. Weiss, ‘A Schema of “the Road” in Philo and Lucan’, *SPA* 1 (1989): 29–43.

<sup>49</sup> On virtue in Philo’s predecessors, see A.W. Price, *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Roslyn Weiss, *Virtue in the Cave: Moral Inquiry in Plato’s Meno* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008), 17–49.

<sup>51</sup> Terence Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 31–51.

<sup>52</sup> For commentary on Philo’s *De virtutibus*, see Walter T. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria: On Virtues: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (PACS 3; Brill: Leiden, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Worthington, *Creation*, 170.

holiness, justice and temperance (*Cher.* 4–8).<sup>54</sup> The latter virtues divide into further categories: the contemplative and the practical (*Leg.* 1.56–64; cf. *Somn.* 2.277). The most valuable virtues are those directed towards the betterment of others.<sup>55</sup>

When humans commit to following the path set forth by virtue, they put themselves in a position to be able to exit out of the so-called liminal state and enter into that teleological state set before them by God. How virtue manifests itself in life is thus an important feature of Philo's programme. Let us take note of those manifestations of the virtuous life that would appear to lead specifically to *Telos*.

For Philo, breaking out of the ontological liminality of 144b and taking on the teleological state of 144c occurs when three elements are present: solitude, bodily submission and contemplation. These are manifestations of one's inherent virtuousness (*Virt.* 12, 55; *Leg.* 3.45; *Abr.* 44). When they are present, the individual is well on his or her way to taking hold of their ontoteleological state of being.

### 3.2.3.2.3 THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

In *De opificio mundi* 151 Philo cites Adam as an exemplar of one who lives in solitude. In his earliest existence, Adam (the mind) lived in solitude, the effect of which was that he lived in perpetual assimilation to God. When his solitude was broken, however, he suffered separation from God.

Abraham is perhaps a better example of one who was successful in maintaining a life of solitude:

Yet he [Abraham] alone appears to have had feelings the opposite of these, and to have thought that no life was so pleasant as one lived without association

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<sup>54</sup> Marcus K.M. Tso, *Ethics in the Qumran Community: An Interdisciplinary Investigation* (WUNT 2.292; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 40–2. Cf. Anton Vögtle, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament: exegetisch, religions- und formgeschichtlich untersucht* (NA 16 4/5; Münster: Aschendorff, 1936), 107–8. See also Philo's lists of virtues and vices in *Sacr.* 20–7; *Leg.* 1.19, 2.23; *Spec.* 3.63.

<sup>55</sup> Tso, *Ethics*, 41; cf. Sandmel, *Philo*, 114–15.



with the multitude. And that is natural, for those who seek God yearn to find Him and love the solitude which is dear to Him, and in this way first of all hasten to make themselves like His blessed and happy nature (*Abr.* 87).

Abraham represents the ‘wise’ and ‘virtuous’ person who has fled the desires of the outward senses in search of the solitude that is so ‘dear to [God]’.

That the verb ἐξομοιόω (‘assimilate’) appears in this context is important. Those who choose a life of solitude flee the outward concerns and enable their mind literally ‘to assimilate to [God’s] happy and blessed nature’ (ἐξομοιούσθαι τῇ μακαρίᾳ καὶ εὐδαίμονι φύσει; *Abr.* 87). Philo further explains that, ‘[U]sing its reason, [this soul] sped upwards and turned its gaze upon the intelligible order (φύσις) which is superior to the visible and upon Him who is maker and ruler of both alike’ (*Abr.* 88). The liberated mind transcends the normal sphere of cognition and enters that in which it beholds God’s ‘happy’, ‘blessed’ and ‘better’ nature (φύσις). The result of this cognitive liberation is then the mind’s assimilation to God (*Abr.* 87–8).

#### 3.2.3.2.4 THE PRACTICAL AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE

Among the things one does while in solitude is to engage in intensive contemplation (θεωρία). Indeed, Philo believes contemplation to stand above all other human engagements, including even the most rigorous outward practices (*Gig.* 60–5). Yet he does not go so far as to say that outward or bodily activities are to be abandoned. Both are necessary to achieve *Telos*.<sup>56</sup>

Philo interprets the biblical injunction to keep the Sabbath holy as an injunction to pursue a life of solitude and contemplation. As he explains in *De Decalogo* 97–101, the creation account lies behind the second commandment. For since God was active during the six days of

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<sup>56</sup> Michael Satlow, ‘Philo on Human Perfection’, *JTS* 59 (2008): 500–19 [515–16].

creation and restful on the seventh, humankind should also adopt a pattern in which they both work and rest. The second commandment is therefore a paradigm of what the active-contemplative life should look like.

Philo then explains in *De Decalogo* 101:

Let us not then neglect this great archetype of the two best lives, the practical and the contemplative (πρακτικοῦ τε καὶ θεωρητικοῦ), but with that pattern ever before our eyes engrave in our hearts the clear image and stamp of them both, so making mortal nature, as far as my be, like the immortal by saying and doing what we ought (ἐξομοιοῦντες θνητὴν φύσιν ὥς ἔνεστιν ἀθάνατον, *Decal.* 101; cf. *Migr.* 166).

When one's life is truly marked by the 'practical' (πρακτικός) and the 'contemplative' (θεωρητικός), the mind enters a continual process of immortalisation.<sup>57</sup>

Contemplation (θεωρία), when balanced with outward practice, leads to one's assimilation to the divine. As Michael Satlow explains, 'Philosophy seems to be the superior path, as it involves an ontological change in the way that the soul deals with the passions. Practice is less certain. Yet both can lead to human perfection'.<sup>58</sup> Including the 'practical' (πρακτικός) in one's life is one mark that a person has virtue (see *Opif.* 144b), for virtue is intrinsically selfless. It seeks the good of others as much as one's own good. Living a life in which one strives on a day-to-day level to act in beneficence towards others places humans on the path towards *Telos*.

### 3.2.3.2.5 ADOPTING THE *VITA CONTEMPLATIVA*

Celia Deutsch has argued that Philo's famous *De vita contemplativa* is a treatise on what can happen to those who study sacred texts and

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Aune, 'Mastery', 131.

<sup>58</sup> Satlow, 'Perfection', 515. Cf. Sze-Kar Wan, 'Charismatic Exegesis: Philo and Paul Compared', *SPA* 6 (1994): 54–82; John R. Levison, 'Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy according to Philo', *SPA* 6 (1994): 83–89; Tatjana Aleknienė, 'L'«extase mystique» dans la tradition platonicienne: Philon d'Alexandrie et Plotin', *SPA* 22 (2010): 53–82

contemplate divine matters the *right* way.<sup>59</sup> She maintains that in the work Philo regards sacred text as a ‘site of mystical experience’ and ‘describes text work both as result of and vehicle for mystical experience’.<sup>60</sup> *De vita contemplativa* is Philo’s presentation of the Therapeutae as an example for others to emulate.

At the heart of the Therapeutic existence is an experience called θεωρία, or ‘contemplation’.<sup>61</sup> Contemplation is essentially the intensive physio-cognitive engagement in divine matters, the most important of which, in Philo, is sacred texts (*Contempl.* 28–9). For it is in sacred texts where God can be known and encountered. Rather than describing contemplation in black and white, however, Philo spends the majority of *De vita contemplativa* painting a portrait of what contemplation looks like in real life. He does this by telling the story of the Therapeutae, who have set themselves apart for the pursuit of asceticism and contemplation (*Contempl.* 1, 78)—what Philo calls the ‘sanctified life’ (*Contempl.* 25).<sup>62</sup>

### 3.2.3.2.6 CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINE

Contemplation of sacred texts is a highly ecstatic and visionary endeavour. It entails such things as ‘sight [not] of the body but of the soul’ that leads one to obtain ‘the vision of the Existent’ (τοῦ ὄντος θεῶς), to ‘soar above the sun of our senses’ (αἰσθητὸν ἥλιον) and to enter an experience of Corybantic ecstasy (*Contempl.* 11–12; cf. *Migr.* 34–5).<sup>63</sup> It leads further to a heightened understanding of Scripture (*Contempl.* 29, 68, 78), an ascent to the divine realm and a direct vision of God (*Contempl.*

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<sup>59</sup> Deutsch, ‘Experience’, 287–312; eadem, ‘Task’, 83–104. Cf. Griffith-Jones, ‘Transformation’, 85–124.

<sup>60</sup> Deutsch, ‘Experience’, 288; cf. eadem, ‘Task’, 86.

<sup>61</sup> On θεωρέω (‘to behold’) and cognates in *Contempl.*, see 1, 29, 58, 64, 67, 68, 78, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Aune, ‘Mastery’, 126–34; Deutsch, ‘Experience’, 293.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 292, who cites Plato (*Theaet.* 176a; *Rep.* 7.514–21; *Symp.* 200e–12b; *Phaedr.* 246–57b) as having influenced Philo’s language of ascent.

11; *Leg.* 3.172–3; *Praem.* 36–46).<sup>64</sup> Not surprisingly *Telos* is among the effects of the experience of contemplation (i.e. τέλειος, *Contempl.* 11).

It is noteworthy that θεωρία appears also in *De opificio mundi*. In §77, for example, Philo explains that God created humanity ‘to partake of kindred (συγγενείας) with himself’, as ‘the animal most resembling (οἰκειοτάτῳ) himself’ and ‘dearest (φιλτάτῳ) to him’ (my trans.). Among the traits that God gave to humanity in making them like himself was ‘reason’ (λογικός). And it is by this the human mind has the ‘power of contemplation (θεωρία) of the heavens’ (my trans.). Philo explains that such contemplation ‘strikes the intellect with wonder and engenders in it the passionate desire to gain knowledge. This is what caused the pursuit of philosophy to spring up, enabling humankind, though mortal, to achieve immortality’ (*Opif.* 77). In other words, through a chain of events, ‘contemplation of the heavens’ (θεωρία τῶν κατ’ οὐρανόν) leads to the mind’s love for ‘understanding’ (ἐπιστήμη), which then leads to the emergence of ‘philosophy’ (φιλοσοφία), by which the ‘mortal’ (θνητός) human ‘becomes immortal’ (ἀπαθανατίζω). Quite simply, contemplation leads eventually to one’s becoming like that which it contemplates (cf. *Fug.* 37, 141; *Mut.* 76; *Mos.* 2.216; *Decal.* 98; *Spec.* 1.269, 288; *Spec.* 3.1).<sup>65</sup> Charles Anderson puts it thus: ‘[T]o behold God is inevitably to become like him’ (cf. *Legat.* 5; *Mos.* 1.158–9; *Virt.* 51; *Praem.* 114).<sup>66</sup> And Gábor Betegh states, ‘[T]he soul becomes like what it is constantly occupied with’.<sup>67</sup>

In *Legum allegoriae* Philo expresses similar thoughts on contemplation. Here he offers a comparison between the ‘perfectly wise’ Moses and other *regular* humans who are ‘making gradual progress’

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<sup>64</sup> Deutsch, ‘Experience’, 293–4.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Mauro Bonazzi, ‘Towards Transcendence: Philo and the Renewal of Platonism in the Early Imperial Age’, in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; ed. F. Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 233–51 [248–9]; Carlos Lévy, ‘Philo’s Ethics’, in *Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 146–71 [146–9].

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, *Physical World*, 156.

<sup>67</sup> Gábor Betegh, ‘Cosmological Ethics in the Timaeus and Early Stoicism’, *OSAP* 24 (Summer): 273–302 [280].

towards *Telos* (3.140). He comments that only Moses has reached a state of *Telos* such that he has completely cut off and discarded the pleasures (Leg. 3.140). He alone has washed himself completely from bodily hindrances (Leg. 3.141, citing Lev 9.14). Philo then explains that although other well-meaning humans have yet to reach a state of equality with Moses, they can emulate him to a great degree. The one who does so is thus 'filled with such contempt for the whole, that he rejects even necessary food and drink, being fed by the contemplation of things divine' (θεωρία τῶν θείων τρεφόμενος, Leg. 3.141; cf. Migr. 53, 150; Her. 246).

In other words, contemplation of the divine leads to a state of being where one transcends even the most basic bodily desires for food and drink. By focusing the mind on the divine (θεῖος), the stranglehold of the body becomes ever weakened. It becomes so weak that the cravings which are fundamental to human subsistence virtually disappear.

### 3.2.3.3 FROM LIMINALITY TO TELOS

Liminality for Philo is not about progressing towards a better social status but about achieving an *altogether new ontoteleological state of existence*. Breaking free of the liminal ontological state and entering the teleological state is a three-step process. It entails, firstly, a retreat both from broader society and from one's own bodily passions. The patriarch Abraham and the Therapeutae exemplify this action. Secondly, the programme involves a commitment to intensive contemplation (θεωρία) on divine matters and sacred texts. Abraham and the Therapeutae are once again prime examples of how this so-called *vita contemplativa* should be undertaken. Thirdly, liminality ends when the mind assimilates to God and becomes like him. Through contemplation, a person becomes like that which he or she thinks.<sup>68</sup> This is the goal towards which the mind has piously endeavoured throughout its life, and it is this which Philo sets forth as the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

end of humankind. We turn now to a fuller examination of what it means to reach this end and achieve *Telos*.

### 3.2.4 THE END OF HUMANITY (*DE OPIFICIO MUNDI* 144c)

We should begin by recalling Philo's statement in the third section (*Opif.* 144c) of our text, where he remarks on the *end* of humankind:

διότι μόναις ψυχαῖς θέμις προσέρχεσθαι τέλος ἡγουμέναις τὴν πρὸς τὸν  
γεννήσαντα θεὸν ἐξομοίωσιν

because only those souls are permitted to approach him who consider the goal of their existence to be assimilation to the God who brought them forth (*Opif.* 144c).

Assimilation is the culmination of the experience of *Telos* (cf. *Decal.* 81). David Aune states it as plainly as possible. 'For Philo', he writes, 'the highest goal for humankind is to become like God'.<sup>69</sup> It is fitting also, as Wendy Helleman suggests, that Philo does not think of assimilation as a one-off event but as more of a transition from one state to another, ultimately to 'become like God'.<sup>70</sup> The climactic nature of assimilation is evident not least in light of the syntax of the statement: Philo makes it the final word in the sentence. But before we can know more about the place of assimilation in the experience of *Telos*, we should first discuss what *else* the experience entails.

#### 3.2.4.1 TELOS AS THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

The closest thing to a definition of *Telos* comes in Philo's commentary on the second of the Ten Commandments. He explains that God has forbidden the worship of idols and demanded his people follow him alone because only by doing so can they obtain *Telos*, or 'understanding'

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<sup>69</sup> Aune, 'Mastery', 128.

<sup>70</sup> Helleman, 'Assimilation', 51–71.

(ἐπιστήμη) of ‘the truly Existent One (τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος), who is the ‘most perfect’ (τελεώτατον, *Decal.* 81). *Telos* is the goal or end towards which humanity should strive.<sup>71</sup> This experience is deeply cognitive, centring on the obtainment of ‘understanding (ἐπιστήμη) of ‘The Truly Existent One’ (τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος).<sup>72</sup>

It is also a process. No one is at the same level of *Telos* at the same time, though all who pursue it eventually reach the same state (cf. *Congr.* 79, 121).<sup>73</sup> Philo distinguishes between the beginners (ἀρχόμενοι), those who are progressing (προκόποντες) and those having reached *Telos* (τετελειωμένοι, *Agr.* 159).<sup>74</sup>

Lastly, *Telos* is a deeply cognitive-visionary experience. It entails the direct encounter with—or ascent to—the divine realm by means of the soul’s liberation from the body (*Leg.* 2.42–44; *Gig.* 61; *Migr.* 2.184–95; *Her.* 69–71; *Spec.* 1.17).<sup>75</sup> Upon reaching this state, the soul partakes of the most elusive vision of God, coming to ‘grasp’ (λαμβάνει) God ‘through himself’ (ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ αὐτὸν, *Leg.* 3.100–01; cf. *Migr.* 34–35; *Somn.* 1.148–51; *Abr.* 122; *Spec.* 1.165; *Contempl.* 11–12).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 624; Aristotle, *Pol.* 6.8; Plato, *Leg.* 6.772c; *Resp.* 7.532b; Job 23.3; Jos. *Ant.* 10.58; *Tg. Josh* 8.2; 2 Macc 5.7; *Ep. Arist.* 308; Ignatius, *Eph.* 14.1.

<sup>72</sup> On the ‘road’ imagery here, see H.D. Weiss, ‘A Schema of ‘the Road’ in Philo and Lucan’, *SPA* 1 (1989): 29–43.

<sup>73</sup> Isabel Massey, *Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount in the Light of Jewish Tradition as Evidenced in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch: Selected Themes* (SBEC 25; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 49–51.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. C.T.R. Hayward, ‘Philo, the Septuagint of Genesis 32:24–32 and the Name “Israel”: Fighting the Passions, Inspiration and the Vision of God’, *JJS* 51 (Autumn 2000): 209–26 [217]; Satlow, ‘Perfection’, 516; Aune, ‘Mastery’, 131.

<sup>75</sup> On ascent in Philo, see John R. Levison, ‘Inspiration and the Divine Spirit in the Writings of Philo Judaeus’, *JSJ* 26 (1995): 271–323; Peder Borgen, ‘Heavenly Ascent in Philo: An Examination of Selected Passages’, in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (JSPSup 14; eds. J.H. Charlesworth and C.A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 246–68; idem, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 309–20; Deutsch, ‘Task’, 299–303; Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 345–6; idem, ‘Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and Their Environment’, *ANRW* II.23.2.1354–8; Schäfer, *Origins*, 154–74; David T. Runia, ‘The Theme of Flight and Exile in the Allegorical Thought-World of Philo of Alexandria’, *SPA* 21 (2009): 133–50.

<sup>76</sup> Goodenough, ‘Philo on Immortality’, 101–2; Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 144–6; Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, & Fate* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 62–79; Satlow, ‘Perfection’, 506–8; Ian W. Scott, ‘Is Philo’s Moses a Divine Man?’ *SPA* 15 (2002): 87–111; Scott D. Mackie,

It should come as no surprise that in *Opif.* 144 Philo links human *Telos* with assimilation to God. Each is truly climactic, consummate and *mystical* at its core.<sup>77</sup> Each signifies the culmination of a difficult process whose effects include the entry into a new degree of understanding and closeness to God and the possession of a new ontological state of being.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.2.4.2 TELOS AND PERMISSION TO APPROACH GOD

The experience of *Telos* involves ‘approaching’ God. The language Philo uses is rather straightforward. He employs the infinitive of the verb προσέρχομαι, a term that means ‘to approach’ and is largely used either in a mundane sense or with sexual connotations (*Opif.* 156; Exod 19.15).

The term does carry a cultic sense, however, that may well be part of Philo’s thinking in *Opif.* 144c. This cultic sense appears in LXX Lev 9, where προσέρχομαι appears once in reference to the congregation’s approach (προσῆλθε) to stand ‘before the Lord’ (v. 5) and twice in reference to Aaron’s approach (πρόσελθε, προσῆλθεν) ‘towards the altar’ (vv. 7, 8; cf. 10.4, 5; 22.3). God tells Moses in the wilderness that if the foreigner ‘comes forward’ (προσέλθη) to observe Passover, he or she should observe it just as the true Israelite (Num 9.14). Yet the Lord forbids everyone but Aaron from approaching (προσελεύσονται, προσέρχομαι, προσελεύσονται) the divine presence (18.3, 4, 22). In Jer 7.16 προσέρχομαι means to come before the Lord in prayer. Ezekiel

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‘Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, or the Existent One?’ *SPA* 21 (2009): 25–47; C.T.R Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism and Some Early Christian Writings: From Victorious Athlete to Heavenly Champion* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), ch. 5; idem, ‘Philo’, 209–26; Gerhard Dellling, ‘The “One Who Sees God” in Philo’, in *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (eds. F.E. Greenspahn et al.; Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1984), 27–41 [29–30].

<sup>77</sup> David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: CUP, 1982), 30–1.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Carlston, ‘The Vocabulary of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews’, in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. R.A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 133–60; Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBLDS 25; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1975), 44, 68–72; Patrick J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 32.



reports that in the future the priesthood ‘shall enter into [the Lord’s] holy places’ and ‘approach [his] table to serve to ‘him]’ (προσελεύσονται, 44.16, my trans.).

There are examples in which Philo employs the verb likewise, specifically in reference to entering into God’s presence. In discussing how it is possible to enter God’s spiritual *temple* in *Deus* 8, for example, Philo asks if anyone is able ‘to endure to approach [the superlatively pure: τῷ καθαρωτάτῳ] God (ὑπομενεῖ δέ τις τῷ θεῷ προσελθεῖν) without being purified in his soul’ (my trans.). The same sense is found in *Sacr.* 12 when he describes Moses as one who ‘approaches God’ (τῷ θεῷ προσέρχεται). In *De plantatione* Philo explains that it is the special privilege of the purified mind to approach God and enter his presence:

τῷ γὰρ ὄντι ὁ τελείως ἐκκαθαρμένος νοῦς καὶ πάντα τὰ γενέσεως ἀπογινώσκων ἐν μόνον οἶδε καὶ γνωρίζει τὸ ἀγέννητον, ᾧ προσελήλυθεν, ὑφ’ οὗ καὶ προσείληπται.

For in reality the mind, which has been perfectly cleansed and purified, and which renounces all things pertaining to creation, is acquainted with One alone, and knows but One, even the Uncreate, to Whom it has drawn nigh, by Whom also it has been taken to Himself (*Plant.* 64).

The mind that is ‘perfectly purified’ is able to approach God, who simultaneously accepts that mind openly. Interestingly, Philo here tells us that this mind knows *and* recognises God. He uses both οἶδα and γνωρίζω perhaps to show that coming to know God is both *intellectual* and *relational*. As in *Opif.* 144, here too Philo indicates that the mind which has devoted itself to pursuing the things of God is privileged, or ‘permitted’ (θέμις), to draw near to him. Most importantly, in both *Opif.* 144 and *Plant.* 64 Philo speaks of approaching God in teleological terms—using τέλος and τέλειος, respectively. To approach God is *a* goal in life.

To approach God is to enter his immediate presence. Whether or not Philo has cultic ideas in mind in using προσέρχομαι in *Opif.* 144 as he does in *Deus* 8 and *Sacr.* 12 is unclear. Regardless, approaching God is

undeniably an intimate encounter between God and the mind (*Opif.* 144; *Plant.* 64).

#### 3.2.4.3 ASSIMILATION TO GOD

The second idea that demands our attention is that of assimilation to God. Philo has led his readers to the point that they understand *Telos* to entail, in part, *drawing near to God*. They are not yet cognisant of the many details of this experience, but they have a general idea as to its intimate nature. It will not be until the last term of the pericope—ἐξομοίωσις ('assimilation')—that the reader is finally informed as to what it really means to achieve *Telos*. Assimilation is a fascinating concept not only in Philo but among others before, during and after his lifetime.

In terms of a definition, we might understand the family of terms as 'become like' or 'likeness to' something.<sup>79</sup> However, this simple definition does not tell us *in what sense* the human, in the case of *Opif.* 144c, *assimilates to* or *becomes like* God. It does not tell us what the experience of assimilation really looks like and what it might reveal about Philo's ontoanthropology.

Due to the elusive nature of Philo's doctrine of assimilation, we shall have to explore it in a somewhat roundabout manner. We first give a brief overview of his own language of assimilation. After this we explore the doctrine in Plato, whose thinking on such matters no doubt influenced Philo's understanding of the doctrine. Then we will discuss an

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<sup>79</sup> Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (WUNT 2.309; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 156; John Dillon, 'Philo and Hellenistic Platonism', in *Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, 223–32 [225]; David N. Sedley, "'Becoming Like God" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle', in *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Platonicum, Granada* (eds. T. Calvo and L. Brisson; Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1997), 327–40; Wendy E. Helleman, 'Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God', *SPA* 2 (1990): 51–71; Theodor Rütger, *Die sittliche Forderung der Apatheia in den beiden ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten und bei Klemens von Alexandria: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des christlichen Vollkommenheitsbegriffes* (FthS 63; Freiburg: Herder, 1949), 17–18; Betegh, 'Cosmological Ethics', 280; Litwa, *Transformed*, 107–9.

example of the doctrine in Galen in the attempt to gain a *visual* idea of what Philo pictures assimilation to look like. After all of this, we shall then be in a position to draw the findings of this section together with those of the previous sections and arrive at a sound understanding of assimilation in Philo.

#### 3.2.4.3.1 OVERVIEW OF PHILO'S ASSIMILATION LANGUAGE

Let us begin with a brief overview of assimilation in Philo. He uses the ὅμος family of terms some 49 times in his writings. The noun ὁμοίωσις appears only six times (*Opif.* 69, 71, 72; *Conf.* 169; *Fug.* 63 twice). In four of its six appearances it is in the accusative (*Opif.* 69, 71, 72; *Conf.* 169;), while in the other two it is in the nominative (*Fug.* 63). Three of these are direct quotations of LXX Gen 2.7 (*Opif.* 71, 72; *Conf.* 169) and thus not original to him.

Philo uses the noun ἐξομοίωσις ('assimilation') seven times (*Opif.* 144; *Abr.* 61; *Decal.* 73, 107; *Spec.* 4.188; *Virt.* 8, 168). The verb ἐξομοιόω then appears 36 times in Philo. It is found 20 times in the active, 12 in the middle and 4 in the passive voice. In 16 occurrences of the verb, it is in the aorist tense, in 19 it is in the present and in only one it is in the imperfect.

Certainly this analysis can only tell us so much about Philo's doctrine of assimilation. It nevertheless supports an important observation we have made at several points so far, namely, that Philo conceives of a link between the *Genesis* and *Telos* of humankind. When Philo employs the language of assimilation, therefore, he uses it in one of two ways. On the one hand, he uses it to describe the relationship between God and humanity in their created state of being. In such instances Philo is typically quoting LXX Gen 2.7 directly. On the other hand, he uses it to describe the event or experience of the mind in its

teleological state of being. The ultimate goal or end of human existence is for the mind to assimilate to God and take on his likeness.

#### 3.2.4.3.2 ASSIMILATION IN PLATO'S *THEAETETUS*

Scholars generally recognise Plato's *Theaetetus* as lying behind Philo's ideas on assimilation.<sup>80</sup> *Theaetetus* is a dialogue between Socrates, Theaetetus and his mathematics instructor, Theodorus. Its principal focus is on the nature of knowledge. At one point, however, the dialogue takes a digression from the broader concern (172a–77c). Here Socrates distinguishes between the visible judicial (or practical) realm and the invisible philosophical (or contemplative) realm. Near the end of this digression, Socrates explains to Theodorus that evils will never cease to bother the body and its world. Vice always plagues the physical world, but its opposite—virtue—can be found in the incorporeal world. Only by way of assimilation to God and his realm can one overcome the perpetual evil plaguing the physical, bodily realms.

As Plato writes:

176b and to escape is to become like God (φυγή δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), so far as this is possible; and to become like God is to become righteous and holy and wise (ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι; *Theaet.* 176a–b; cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 10.7; Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2).<sup>81</sup>

Assimilation (ὁμοίωσις) is the experience of escaping the bonds of the 'mortal nature' (θνητὴν φύσιν), entering the divine, philosophical or contemplative realm, and therein becoming like God.

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<sup>80</sup> On Philo and Plato's *Timaeus*, see Runia, *Timaeus*; Gretchen Reydam-Schils, 'Stoicized Readings of Plato's *Timaeus* in Philo of Alexandria', *SPA* 7 (1995): 85–102; Maren R. Niehoff, 'Did the *Timaeus* Create a Textual Community?' *GRBS* 47 (2007): 161–91; George R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 102; cf. Julia Annas, 'Recent Work on Plato's *Timaeus*', *SPA* 18 (2006): 125–42.

<sup>81</sup> Unless otherwise noted, text and translation of Plato's *Theaetetus* are from Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (LCL 123; ed. and trans. Harold North Fowler; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1921).

Plato goes on to clarify that there are false and true reasons for pursuing virtue and fleeing vice:

176c Let us give the true reason. God is in no wise and in no manner unrighteous, but utterly and perfectly righteous (οὐδαμῶς ἄδικος, ἀλλ' ὥς οἶόν τε δικαιοτάτος), and there is nothing so like him (ὁμοιότερον) as that one of us who in turn becomes most nearly perfect in righteousness (δικαιοτάτος). It is herein that the true cleverness of a man is found and also his worthlessness and cowardice; for the knowledge of this is wisdom or true virtue (γνώσις σοφία καὶ ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή), and ignorance of it is folly or manifest wickedness (ἡ δὲ ἄγνοια ἀμαθία καὶ κακία ἐναργής; *Theaet.* 176c).

In Philo's estimation, becoming like God—assimilating to him—has to do with becoming 'superlatively righteous' (δικαιοτάτος). Righteousness for Plato is the alignment of one's soul with the virtues and character of God, which then manifests itself when the individual contributes to broader society (*Rep.* 443a–44c; *Prot.* 330b).<sup>82</sup> Becoming righteous is also a deeply cognitive enterprise, a fact made explicit by Plato's contrast between 'knowledge' (γνώσις) and 'ignorance' (ἄγνοια) in *Theaet.* 176c.

#### 3.2.4.3.3 ASSIMILATION IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

Plato speaks of assimilation in a similar way in a well-known passage in his *Timaeus*, his own account of the creation of the world.<sup>83</sup> Near the end of the *Timaeus*, Plato offers something of a summary statement about the creation of humanity and the nature of human existence (*Tim.* 89d–92c).<sup>84</sup> Parts of this summary are similar to Philo's statement in *Opif.* 144.

Plato begins this summary by stating that humans have three kinds of soul inside, or a threefold soul, each of which is unique according to its motions. The dominant part of this threefold soul is the mind (*Tim.* 90a).

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<sup>82</sup> On justice in Plato, see R.F. Stalley, 'Punishment and the Physiology of the *Timaeus*', *CQ* NS 46 (1996): 357–70.

<sup>83</sup> Gabriela Roxana Carone, 'Creation in the "Timaeus": The Middle Way', *Apeiron* 37 (Sept 2004): 211–26; Aryeh Finkelberg, 'Plato's Method in *Timaeus*', *AJPh* 117 (Autumn 1996): 391–409; Richard Patterson, 'The Unique Worlds of the "Timaeus"', *Phoenix* 35 (Summer 1981): 105–19.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Runia, *Timaeus*, 323–52.

The mind dwells in the top of the body—i.e. the head. Because minds ‘are not an earthly but a heavenly plant’, it is their natural inclination to strive to ‘raise’ the human in which they dwell ‘towards our kindred in the heaven’. He goes on to say that ‘it is by suspending our head and root from that region whence the substance of our soul first came that the Divine Power keeps upright our whole body’ (*Tim.* 90a–b).

At stake is what makes one soul more dominant and hence more in control of the human being than the other parts. In Plato’s view, whichever part is given the most attention and effort is that which gains strength over the others. The soul which is exercised thus becomes strongest, while that which does not in turn becomes weak (*Tim.* 89e).

The mind’s pursuit of heaven, then, is entrenched in a battle with the body. When more attention is paid to the body than to the mind, the body gains strength and eventually overcomes the mind. For when someone devotes him- or herself to bodily matters, his or her soul actually becomes like the body—‘mortal’ (θνητός, *Tim.* 90b).

Yet the reward for the one who devotes him- or herself to proper things is different. As Plato explains:

90b he who has seriously devoted himself to learning and to true thoughts, and has exercised these qualities above all his others,

90c must necessarily and inevitably think thoughts that are immortal and divine (φρονεῖν μὲν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα), if so be that he lays hold on truth, and in so far as it is possible for human nature to partake of immortality (ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται), he must fall short thereof in no degree; and inasmuch as he is for ever tending his divine part (θεῖον) and duly magnifying that daemon who dwells along with him, he must be supremely blessed (διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα εἶναι). And the way of tendance of every part by every man is one—namely, to supply each with its own congenial food and motion; and for the divine part within us (ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον) the congenial motions

90d are the intellections and revolutions of the Universe. These each one of us should follow, rectifying the revolutions within our head, which were distorted at our birth, by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the Universe, and thereby making the part that thinks like unto the object of its thought, in accordance with its original nature (τῷ κατανοούμενῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξωμοιωσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν), and having achieved this likeness attain finally to that goal of life which is set before men by the gods as the most good both for the present and for the time to come (ὁμοιωσάντα δὲ τέλος ἔχειν τοῦ

προτεθέντος ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀρίστου βίου πρὸς τε τὸν παρόντα καὶ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον, *Tim.* 90b–d).

One could spend more space than we have discussing the differences between the accounts of assimilation in *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus*. The most obvious difference is probably the objects to which humans are said to assimilate in each passage. Whereas in *Theaetetus* humans assimilate to God, in *Timaeus* they assimilate to the harmonies and revolutions of the universe.

The differences, however, must not overshadow the tremendous similarity between the two passages, namely, the deeply cognitive nature of assimilation. Plato espouses a doctrine in both passages in which the human being *becomes like what it thinks*.<sup>85</sup> This idea is subtler in *Theaetetus* than in *Timaeus*, but it is still present. In the former, Plato explains that assimilation to God comes about to those who pursue and obtain knowledge (γνῶσις), and it is surely out of the reach of those without knowledge (ἄγνοια). In the latter, as we have just seen, Plato makes this fact explicit. When the human devotes him- or herself to realigning the mind to the workings of the cosmos, he or she makes ‘the part that thinks like unto the object of its thought’. In other words, *the mind assimilates to that which it thinks*.

What is more, like Philo, Plato regards assimilation as the *Telos* of human existence. To achieve assimilation is to ‘attain finally to that goal (τέλος) of life which is set before men by the gods as the most good both for the present and for the time to come’ (*Tim.* 90d). That consummate goal towards which humanity should strive is none other than assimilation to God and his realm.

Regarding the issue of ontology, Plato conceives of a distinction that which is *material* and that which is *immaterial* (*Rep.* 518c, 596a; *Phaedo* 70b–72a, 79a, 102b–07b; *Meno* 71–86; *Symp.* 210–11; *Soph.* 246–

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<sup>85</sup> Betegh, ‘Cosmological Ethics’, 280.

59).<sup>86</sup> In contrast to the material-sensory realm, the ideal realm is immaterial (*Phaedr.* 247c), unchangeable (*Phaedo* 78c–d), eternal (*Phaedo* 79d; *Tim.* 27d–28a, 37e–38a) and in fact divine (*Phaedo* 80a–b). The soul does not shed one form of materiality to take on a divine materiality, as perhaps one of a Stoic mind might think. Rather, it remains immaterial, becoming ever more like God in the process.

To press this point a bit further, the important ontological implication is that for something to undergo an ontological change does not require that such a change is a material one. Here the ontological change has to do with the soul moving from one state of being (natural) to a different one (divine). This is Plato's conception of the soul's assimilation to God. Even still, we are left with only a vague conception about the experience. In order to fill in many of the missing details, we now turn to the work of one whose understanding of assimilation was rather picturesque as compared to that of Philo.

#### 3.2.4.3.4 ASSIMILATION IN GALEN

Perhaps the most helpful description of assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις) comes in the writings of Galen of Pergamon (ca. 129–200 C.E.). Although Galen wrote over a century after Philo, his discussion of the way food and drink assimilate to the human body during digestion is helpful for our study. It illustrates in physiological terms the way an otherwise ethereal concept operates, and in this regard sheds light on other conceptions of assimilation in and around his time—in our case, that of Philo.

In his *On the Natural Faculties* Galen explains:

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<sup>86</sup> Dorothea Frede, 'The Final Proof of the Immortality of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedo* 102a–107a', *Phronesis* 23 (1978) 27–41; Alexander Nehamas, 'Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World', in *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (ed. G. Fine; Oxford: OUP, 1999), 171–91; Gregory Vlastos, 'Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*', *PR* 78 (July 1969): 291–325; Julia Annas, 'Plato's Myths of Judgment', *Phronesis* 27 (1982): 119–43.



We have, then, it seems, arrived at the subject of Nutrition (θρέψις), which is the third and remaining consideration which we proposed at the outset. For, when the matter (τροφῆς) which flows to each part of the body in the form of nutriment is being worked up into it, this activity is *nutrition*, and its cause is the *nutritive faculty*. Of course, the kind of activity here involved is also an *alteration* (ἀλλοίωσις), but not an alteration like that occurring at the stage of *genesis*.<sup>1</sup> For in the latter case something comes into existence which did not exist previously, while in nutrition the inflowing material becomes assimilated (συνεξομοιούται) to that which has already come into existence. Therefore, the former kind of alteration (ἀλλοίωσιν) has with reason been termed *genesis*, and the latter, *assimilation* (ἐξομοίωσιν, *Nat. Fac.* 1.8).<sup>87</sup>

Galen is here discussing the natural processes of the human body during digestion. When food is eaten, it assimilates (συνεξομοιόω) to the body. The result is that the food becomes transformed (ἀλλοίωσις) *into* bodily matter. Food that is ingested enters a process in which it mixes with the body in such a way that it sheds its *natural* state of existence. Rather than cease to exist, however, this food takes on a *new* state of existence: i.e. that of the body itself.

Galen will return to this topic slightly later in the same book. In this case, he will offer a definition of the process he calls ‘nutrition’ (θρέψις):

Its name, as previously stated, is *nutrition* (θρέψις), and the definition corresponding to the name is: *an assimilation of that which nourishes to that which receives nourishment* (ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος ὁμοίωσις τοῦ τρέφοντος τῷ τρεφόμενῳ). And in order that this may come about, we must assume a preliminary process of *adhesion* (πρόσφυσιν) and for that, again, one of *presentation* (πρόσθεσιν). For whenever the juice which is destined to nourish any of the parts of the animal is emitted from the vessels, it is in the first place dispersed all through this part, next it is presented, and next it adheres (προσφύεται), and becomes completely assimilated (τελέως ὁμοιούται, *Nat. Fac.* 1.11, italics my own).

After ingestion, food or drink ‘becomes completely assimilated’ (τελέως ὁμοιούται) to the body. Assimilation is a one-directional process. The two entities that meet do not become assimilated to one another equally. Rather, the subservient entity (i.e. food or drink) assimilates to the more

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<sup>87</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Greek text and English translation of Galen’s *On the Natural Faculties* are from Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* (LCL 71; trans. A.J. Brock; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1916).

dominant one (i.e. body). As Galen explains, '[N]utrition occurs by an *alteration* or *assimilation* of that which nourishes to that which receives nourishment' (ἀλλοιούμενου τε καὶ ὁμοιούμενου γίγνεται τοῦ τρέφοντος τῷ τρεφομένῳ, *Nat. Fac.* 3.1; cf. 2.3). Slightly later he reiterates the point:

Each of the organs draws into itself the nutriment alongside it, and devours all the useful fluid in it, until it is thoroughly satisfied; this nutriment, as I have already shown, it stores up in itself, afterwards making it adhere and then assimilating it (ὅταν ἤδη πρόσφυσις ἢ ἐξομοίωσις αὐτοῦ γίγνηται)—that is, it becomes nourished by it (*Nat. Fac.* 3.13).

Assimilation therefore occurs when a lesser entity takes on the properties of the entity that takes it in. Never do we find the reverse order to be true: i.e. the body never assimilates to food or drink.

#### 3.2.4.3.5 ASSIMILATION IN PHILO *ONCE MORE*

It is perhaps this portrait of assimilation that Philo has in mind in *Opif.* 144c. We must emphasise that we are *not* arguing that Philo somehow drew from Galen. Rather, it is important to note that Galen found the assimilation family of terms fitting to depict what happens when the body digests food and drink the way Philo uses it in describing what happens when the mind enters the divine presence.

Assimilation was a well-known idea in and around Philo's day. It was a very picturesque concept. When an author employed it, he or she did so because of the vivid picture it painted. That picture, as our illustrations from Plato and Galen suggest, is one in which *a smaller entity becomes mixed with a greater upon contact*, becoming subsumed by it. Hence when the body ingests food and drink, the former subsumes the latter. The same would seem to be true of the cognitive encounter with God. Upon contemplating God, the lesser entity (mind) becomes assimilated to the greater one upon which it thinks (God).

It is noteworthy that Philo likens the soul's vision of God to the experience of *theophagic transformation* (see Part IV).<sup>88</sup> Remarking on Moses' experience at Sinai, Philo explains that 'this vision is the food of the soul and true partaking is the cause of a life of immortality. Wherefore it is said indeed "they ate and drank"' (Exod 24.11—*QE* 2.39).<sup>89</sup> At the very least, we are safe to assume that Philo has *ingestion-type ideas in mind* when he thinks about the mystical vision and its effects on the body.

Perhaps the clearest example of how Philo conceives of assimilation in particular is found in his account of Moses' encounter with God at Sinai.<sup>90</sup> Philo believes Moses to have taken on a permanent divine state at Sinai (*QE* 2.29). What this state of being looked like is interesting. Philo describes Moses as having been transformed, literally, 'into mind' (εἰς νοῦν), which he describes as 'exceedingly sunlike' (ἡλιοειδέστατον, *Mos.* 2.288).<sup>91</sup> Moreover, as Litwa points out, the description of the mind in *Mos.* 2.288 resembles other descriptions in which Philo speaks of it as 'hot' (ἔνθερμος) and 'fiery' (πυρόω) spirit (πνεῦμα, *Fug.* 134).<sup>92</sup> The entire account centres on Moses' experience of *return*—his final voyage—to the divine realm and to the presence of God. It was his deification.<sup>93</sup>

We might safely conclude from this and from what we know about assimilation more broadly that, if anything, Moses' experience had a certain amount of *Substanz* to it—it was almost certainly a 'divine substance', as Litwa insists.<sup>94</sup> Philo almost certainly drew upon Stoic

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Daniel Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna: The Psychedelic Sacrament of the Bible* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street, 2000); idem, *The Psychedelic Sacrament: Manna, Meditation, and Mystical Experience* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> English translation of Philo's *QE* is that of Ralph Marcus, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1953), 82.

<sup>90</sup> Litwa, *Transformed*, 106–9.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 107–8.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 107; Fletcher-Louis, '4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology', *DSD* 3 (1996): 236–52 [242]; contra Donald Hagner, 'The Vision of God in Philo and John: A Comparative Study', *JETS* 14 (1971): 81–93 [90].

<sup>94</sup> Litwa, *Transformed*, 108.

conceptions of the Spirit here. The hot and fiery substance into which Moses was changed was, moreover, precisely that which comprised the realm he entered. In other words, he became like the realm by which he was subsumed, and *whatever it was that he became, there is no doubt that it was wholly substantiell in nature*.<sup>95</sup>

What takes place during biological assimilation (so Galen) is thus the same as that which occurs during assimilation to God (so Philo). The smaller entity ‘blends’ with the greater, whereupon the former becomes ontologically akin to the latter into which it becomes mixed. There is such an overlap that all that can truly be said is that the human mind (smaller entity) is now *assimilated to or like* God himself (greater entity) with whom it has mixed. Litwa rightly points out the substantive nature of this encounter, at least as it occurs in Moses’ experience (so *Mos.* 2.288; *Virt.* 76).<sup>96</sup> The divine and human are so intermixed with one another that at a cursory level they appear to have become a single entity. Yet this is not necessarily the case. Based on the terminology Philo uses to describe the event of mixture, we can conclude that the components which mix together are only *apparently* singular but can become separated from one another, were it to come to that (see §1.5.4.3).

### 3.3 A SUMMARY OF GREEK-PHILOSOPHICAL JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

In contrast to HZ, in Philo there is a clear distinction between the inner and outer parts of the human. The inner part—the mind—in fact has a share in divinity, though only latently in its present, liminal state (NS). The mind’s desire to assimilate to God and realise its inherent divinity motivates the experience that Philo sets forth (P<sup>1</sup>). Asceticism, solitude and contemplation of sacred texts and divine matters lead one towards the DHE (P<sup>2</sup>). In *Opif.* 144 Philo focuses on the human side of the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 107.

encounter with God, indicating here that it is predominantly one-directional. He emphasises that the human *Telos* is to strive to encounter God (DHE: HA), though at times he seems to think of the encounter as one of mutual advance (MA). When the mind meets God, the two mix in such a way that the mind realises its *true* divinity. There is no sense in which an altogether new entity emerges. Blending thus seems the best characterisation of mixture in Philo (*Mix K*). The human is a thoroughly centripetal creature (*CentriP*), and much is required in order to achieve the DHE. When the encounter finally does occur, the resultant change is one in which the mind realises its true, divine state of being, whose ontological composition is akin to that of God himself (MT: TRH).

### 3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Philo gives an account of human existence from beginning to end in what we have termed his *ontoteleological programme*. In this programme, he prescribes a path that others might follow in the attempt to realise the latent divinity of their own minds. The divinity is there, but it lies trapped underneath the bodily encumbrances. Through the proper means, however, the human can liberate the mind to soar through the cosmos and, at the end of its journey, to stand before God in heaven, where it assimilates to God's being, mixing with God in such a way as to take on his ontological likeness.

We shall return to Philo below in chapter eight. His ideas on the natural state of humankind as well as their transformed state are particularly notable and will factor into the ontoanthropology we aim to lay out therein. For now we turn to an examination of two examples of Genus 3 in chapters four and five.

## **PART III**

### **GENUS 3—COMMUNAL TRANSFORMATION**

## CHAPTER 4

### GOD'S ANTHROPOMORPHOUS HOUSE THE LIVING TEMPLE AT QUMRAN

#### 4.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

Having explored two critical examples of Genus 2, the present chapter turns now to Qumran-Sectarian Judaism (DSS), which represents Species 3A of Genus 3 (Communal Transformation). The Qumran sectarian community possess a thoroughly community-centred outlook which permeates, among other things, their ideas on human mutability and mystical change. What their writings reveal about ancient Jewish ontoanthropology is indeed revealing.

As many scholars now recognise, the community viewed themselves to be, in some way or another, a temporary substitute for what they thought to be the now-defiled Jerusalem Temple.<sup>1</sup> The question yet to be agreed upon is *in what sense* they conceived of themselves as such. The present chapter thus explores texts which are alleged to propagate this community-as-temple doctrine in the attempt to extract from it a sectarian ontoanthropology.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Klinzing, *Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im NT* (SUNT 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 50–106; Devorah Dimant, '4QFlorilegium and the Idea of the Community as Temple', in *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* (eds. A. Caquot et al.; Leuven-Paris: Peeters, 1986), 165–89; Michael O. Wise, '4QFlorilegium and the Temple of Adam', *RevQ* 15 (1991): 103–32; John J. Collins, 'Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (SDSSRL; eds. J.J. Collins and R.A. Kugler; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 9–28 [12–14]; Alex P. Jassen, 'Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *RC* 1 (2007): 1–25 [7]; Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament* (SNTSMS 1; Cambridge: CUP, 1965), 22–30; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 107; Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, 32; Florentino García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (STDJ 9; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 206; Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 164–5; Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity* (WUNT 2.291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 139–62.

<sup>2</sup> It must be emphasised at the outset that while debate centres on whether or not a particular work can be considered 'sectarian'—or of Yahad provenance—those we discuss in this chapter can be considered so with much confidence. These include

#### 4.1.1 SEREKH HA-YAHAD

At the core of our analysis is the work known as Serekh ha-Yahad (Serekh), or the ‘Rule of the Community’.<sup>3</sup> Serekh is one of the earliest works discovered at Qumran and appears to have been well known among the community from early on.<sup>4</sup> It is an unambiguously ‘sectarian’ work and thus an accurate representative of the views of the community.<sup>5</sup>

##### 4.1.1.1 MANUSCRIPTS AND DATING OF SEREKH HA-YAHAD

Two copies of Serekh have been recovered from Cave 1 (1QS).<sup>6</sup> Ten fragmentary copies have also been found in Cave 4 (4QS<sup>d-i</sup> = 4Q255–64).<sup>7</sup>

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Serekh ha-Yahad, Self-Glorification Hymn, 4QFlorilegium and the Sabbath Shirot. Of course, not all scholars will agree with our view of these works as sectarian. Further evidence will be given for our such a view in the opening comments on each of these works below.

<sup>3</sup> The name סֵרֶךְ הַיְּהוּדָה is found in 1QS i 1.

<sup>4</sup> For commentaries and translations of Serekh ha-Yahad, see e.g. Markus N.A. Bockmuehl, ‘Redaction and Ideology in the *Rule of the Community*’, *RevQ* 18 (1998): 541–60; Alfred R.C. Leaney, *The Rule of the Community and its Meaning: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (NTL; London: SCM, 1966); Jacob Licht, *The Rule Scroll: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea. 1QS, 1Qsa, 1Qsb: Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1965); Sarianna S. Metso, *The Textual Development of the Qumran Community Rule (STDJ 21)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Preben Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline, Translated and Annotated (STDJ 1)* (Leiden: Brill, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> So Carol A. Newsom, ‘“Sectually Explicit” Literature from Qumran’, in *The Hebrew Bible and its Interpreters* (BJS 1; eds. W.H. Propp et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 167–87 [169–71]; Hartmut Stegemann, ‘Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für die Erforschung der Apokalyptik’, in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, 17–19 August 1979* (ed. D. Hellholm; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 495–530.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated, we follow the reconstructions of 1QS of Elisha Qimron and James H. Charlesworth, ‘Rule of the Community (1QS)’, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, Volume 1: Rule of the Community and Related Documents* (PTSDSSP; eds. J.H. Charlesworth and F.M. Cross; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 1–52, for reasons they give there. Other valuable reconstructions of 1QS include those of Millar Burrows, John C. Trever and William H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of Saint Mark’s Monastery, Volume 2: Plates and Transcription of the Manual of Discipline* (New Haven: ASOR, 1951); William H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline* (BASORSup 10–12; New Haven: ASOR, 1951); Dominique Barthélemy and J.T. Milik, *Qumrân Cave 1 (DJD I)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955).



Another was discovered in Cave 5 (5Q11) and yet another in Cave 11 (11Q29).<sup>8</sup> 1QS is the best preserved of all manuscripts assigned to Serekh, itself being nearly complete.<sup>9</sup>

The entire Serekh corpus dates between 125 B.C.E. (1QS, 4QpapS<sup>a</sup>, 4QS<sup>b</sup>, 4QS<sup>d-j</sup>) and 50 C.E. (4QS<sup>h</sup>).<sup>10</sup> Scholars debate whether 1QS or 4QS is older, and 1QS viii 1–10a, 12b–16a; ix 3–x 8 may well belong to an early period in the work’s development.<sup>11</sup> This is moot, however, since we have a nearly complete copy of 1QS with which to work.

#### 4.1.1.2 OVERVIEW OF SEREKH HA-YAHAD

1QS offers insight into the ideals and practices of the sectarian community. It begins with an address ‘to the Maskil’ (לַמַּשְׁכִּיל), a purpose statement which indicates that the work seeks to guide the community towards doing what is good and just ‘in [God’s] presence’ (בְּפָנָיו), and remarks as to why a person should enter the community (i 1–15). It follows with discussion about one’s ‘crossing over’ (i 24) into

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In our study, we have consulted these and other pertinent studies on the text of 1QS noted in the following footnotes.

<sup>7</sup> On 4QS see Philip S. Alexander and Geza Vermes, *Qumran Cave 4. XIX: Serekh Ha-Yahad and Two Related Texts* (DJD XXVI; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> On 5Q511 see Maurice Baillet et al., *Les ‘Petites Grottes’ de Qumrân* (DJD III; Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 180–1. On 11Q29 see García Martínez, Eibert Tigchelaar and Adam S. van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11.II (11Q2–18, 11Q20–31)* (DJD XXIII, Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 433–4.

<sup>9</sup> A digitalised copy of 1QS can be found online at <<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/community>>. Cf. Alison Schofield, *From Qumran to the Yahad: A New Paradigm of Textual Development for The Community Rule* (STDJ 77; Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> On the dating of 4QS, see Alexander and Vermes, DJD XXVI, 20–1.

<sup>11</sup> For a later date of 1QS, see Frank Moore Cross, ‘Introduction’, in *Scrolls from Qumran Cave I: The Great Isaiah Scroll, the Order of the Community, the Pesher to Habakkuk* (eds. idem et al.; Jerusalem: Albright Institute, 1972), 1–5; Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, ‘In Search of the Scribe of 1QS’, in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (eds. S.M. Paul et al.; VTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 439–52; Metso, *Development*; idem, ‘In Search of the Sitz im Leben of the Community Rule’, in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 30; eds. D.W. Parry and E. Ulrich; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 306–15. On Alexander’s view, see Philip S. Alexander, ‘The Redaction-History of Serekh ha-Yahad: A Proposal’, *RevQ* 17/65–68 (1996): 437–56; cf. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, ‘Community, Rule of the’, in *ABD* 1.1110–11.

the covenant (i 16–ii 18) and subsequent purification by the Holy Spirit (iii 6). Stern warnings not to transgress even a single commandment are then put forth (iii 11). The sermon on the ‘two spirits’ comes next, which pits the sons of light against the sons of darkness (iii 13–iv 26). Basic rules for life as a member of the community then follow (v 1–vii 25).

Column viii then offers guidelines directed towards a seemingly small cell, made up of some twelve to fifteen men within the community (viii 1–x 8). Led by the Maskil (ix 12–26), the cell are portrayed in terms commonly used to describe the Jerusalem Temple, its priesthood and the sacrificial service—language we investigate in depth below (viii 4–10; ix 3–6). Serekh ends finally with a hymn of praise that contains an important reference to what appears to be a mystical experience (x 9–xi 22).

#### **4.1.2 1QS AND THE SECTARIAN MOVEMENT**

There is some debate about the nature of the movement behind the DSS, much of which centres on 1QS. The issue is that 1QS is ambiguous as to its overall depiction of the community or communities it is trying to establish, offering more or less two divergent portraits. The group as depicted in 1QS viii–xi, and especially in viii–ix, differ markedly from those in i–vii. The question is how to explain this. Does the work intend to describe a single group in vastly different ways, only to execute this aim poorly? Or does it actually intend to describe two different groups?

##### *4.1.2.1 TWO DEPICTIONS OF THE SAME COMMUNITY*

There are those who argue that i–vii and viii–xi are intended to describe the same group of people. That the two parts offer incompatible portraits of this same group suggests, to such scholars, that the editors of 1QS have

executed their intended task poorly. They have awkwardly placed i–vii and viii–ix (along with x–xi) together to form a single work.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1.2.2 AN ELITE GROUP WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Others insist that columns viii–xi depict a group different from that in i–vii, hence the reason for the diverging portraits found in 1QS.<sup>13</sup> Shane Berg offers an especially strong defence of this argument.<sup>14</sup> He maintains that 1QS viii–ix set forth stipulations for a group of elite sectarians who have been set apart from those of the general sectarian populace described in i–vii.<sup>15</sup> In his thinking, the latter portion of 1QS is best understood ‘as a description of the creation of a special group, not yet formed, that is to serve in a unique role in the life of the larger Community’.<sup>16</sup> This ‘special group’ of elite sectarians make their first appearance in 1QS viii 1–4 but remain in focus throughout viii–xi.<sup>17</sup> Their ranks consist of no more than fifteen men—‘twelve men and three priests’—who are marked by exceptional ‘perfection’ (תְּמִיּוֹת) and ‘holiness’ (קִדְּוֶה).<sup>18</sup>

If this view of the community is correct, it is tenable to think that the movement took the form of a multiplicity of cells living throughout

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. Metso, ‘In Search’, 306–15; Charlotte Hempel, ‘Interpretative Authority in the Community Rule Tradition’, *DSD* 10 (2003): 59–80.

<sup>13</sup> Shane A. Berg, ‘An Elite Group within the *Yahad*: Revisiting 1QS 8–9’, in *Qumran Studies: New Approaches, New Questions* (eds. M.T. Davis and B.A. Strawn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 161–77.

<sup>14</sup> Berg, ‘Elite’, 161–77; cf. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 323–5; John J. Collins, ‘Forms of the Community in the Dead Sea Scrolls’, in *Emanuel*, 97–111.

<sup>15</sup> Berg, ‘Elite’, 161.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 165, italics original; cf. Schofield, *Qumran*, 144–7.

<sup>17</sup> John J. Collins *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 67, 71; cf. *idem*, ‘*Yahad* and “Qumran Community”’, in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (SJSJ 111; eds. C. Hempel and J. Lieu; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 81–96 [85]; *idem*, ‘Forms’, 104.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 165 n. 14; cf. 171–3. See 1QS viii 20: ‘men of perfect holiness’; viii 21: ‘council of holiness of those walking in perfect behaviour’; ix 8: ‘men of holiness walking in perfection’.

Judea (see 1QS vi 1–8; viii 1–ix 11).<sup>19</sup> The elite would have been just one of many cells comprising the movement. Nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity we speak of this multiplicitous movement in terms of the Qumran community, sectarian community, sect or Yahad.<sup>20</sup>

## 4.2 THE LIVING TEMPLE IN SEREKH HA-YAHAD

The Qumran sectarian community viewed themselves as a temple. *In what sense* they thought of themselves as such remains to be seen. This self-identity finds its clearest expression in three statements in 1QS: viii 4–10, ix 3–6 and xi 3–10. Let us briefly look at these texts to get a basic understanding of sectarian community-as-temple identity. In the following sections, we then attempt to understand the mystical-transformative nature of this communal identity.

### 4.2.1 THE COMMUNITY AS THE TEMPLE (1QS VIII–IX)

The first two texts focus on the community as a temple. As we shall see shortly, 1QS viii 4–10 establishes this self-identity in a straightforward manner. It states in unequivocal terms *that* the community are a temple, using temple-based language and echoes of Scripture to do so. 1QS ix 3–6 then expresses *how* the community *become* or *act as* the temple. It repeats much of the language of viii 4–10 but gives indication as to what steps the community must take *in order to realise their role as the dwelling of God* and at what point they indeed do so. We shall first make only

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the nature of the rabbinic movement below in §7.1.2.

<sup>20</sup> John J. Collins, 'The Nature and Aims of the Sect Known from the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (SJSJ 122; eds. A. Hilhorst et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 31–52 [47]; Newsom, *Symbolic Space*, 134–5. See also Preben Wernberg-Møller, 'The Nature of the Yahad according to the *Manual of Discipline* and Related Documents', *ALUOS* 6 (1969): 56–81; idem, *The Manual of Discipline* (STDJ 1; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 44; Schofield, *Qumran*, 138–44; Collins, *Community*, 67; idem, 'Beyond the Qumran Community: Social Organization in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *DSD* 16 (2009): 351–69; idem, 'Yahad', 85; idem, 'Forms', 104. Contra Frank Moore Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 3d ed., 1995), 70–1; James H. Charlesworth, 'Community Organization in the Rule of the Community', *EDSS* 1.133.

tentative observations about the allegedly mystical meaning of the texts in question. In §§4.2.2–4.2.3 we will then explore the images in more depth, probing them for what they might reveal about sectarian self-identity.

#### 4.2.1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNAL TEMPLE (1QS viii 4–10)

Following the description of the elite in 1QS viii 1–4, lines 4–10 read:

viii 4 בהיות אלה בישראל 5 נכונה העצת היחד באמת למטעת עולם  
 בית קודש לישראל וסוד קודש 6 קודשים לאהרון עדי אמת  
 למשפט וביחירי רצון לכפר בעד הארץ ולחשב 7 לרשעים  
 גמולם היא חומת הבחן פנת יקר בל 8 יודעו יסדותיהו  
 ובל יחישו ממקומם מעון קודש קודשים 9 לאהרון בדעת  
 כולם עולם לברית משפט ולקריב ריח ניחוח ובית תמים  
 ואמת בישראל 10 להקם ברית לחקות עולם והיו לרצון  
 לכפר בעד הארץ ולחרוץ משפט רשעה בתמים דרך ואין  
 עולה בהכון

viii 4 When these are in Israel, 5 the Council of the Community shall be established in truth. It shall be an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel, and Assembly of Supreme 6 Holiness for Aaron. They shall be witnesses to the truth at the Judgement, and shall be the elect of Goodwill who shall atone for the Land and pay to 7 the wicked their reward. It shall be that tried wall, that *precious corner-stone*, 8 whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place (Isa. xxviii, 16). It shall be a Most Holy Dwelling 9 for Aaron, with everlasting knowledge of the Covenant of justice, and shall offer up sweet fragrance. It shall be a House of Perfection and Truth in Israel 10 that they may establish a Covenant according to the everlasting precepts. And they shall be an agreeable offering, atoning for the Land and determining the judgement of wickedness, and there shall be no more iniquity (1QS viii 4–10).<sup>21</sup>

The community have chosen to describe themselves using a complex of terms that had long been used of the Temple. They are literally an ‘eternal planting’ and ‘house of holiness for Israel’ (line 5); a ‘foundation/assembly of the Holy of Holies for Aaron’ (lines 5–6); a ‘wall of testing’

<sup>21</sup> All English translations of the DSS are taken from Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, rev. ed., 1998), unless otherwise noted. Occasionally we make slight modifications to his translations. We should note that in quoting reconstructed texts in the original, we remove many of the text-critical markings, with the exception of ellipses (i.e. ‘...’), for smoother reading. We retain these markings if and when they pertain directly to our discussion.

and ‘precious cornerstone’ (line 7); a ‘dwelling of the Holy of Holies for Aaron in knowledge’ (lines 8–9; cf. ix 6); and a ‘house of perfection and truth’ (line 9; cf. v 6). More will be said on these images below in §4.2.3.

#### 4.2.1.2 BECOMING THE SITE OF GOD’S GLORY (1QS ix 3–6)

A second and similar description is found in 1QS ix 3–6:

ix 3 בהיות אלה בישראל ככול התכונים האלה ליסוד רוח  
קודש לאמת 4 עולם לכפר על אשמת פשע ומעל המאט ולרצון  
לארץ מבשר עולות ומחלבי זבח ותרומת 5 שפתים למשפט  
בניחוח צדק ותמים דרך כנדבת מנחת רצון בעת ההיא  
יבדילו אנשי 6 היחד בית קודש לאהרון להיחד קודש  
קודשים ובית יחד לישראל ההולכים בתמים

ix 3 When these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall establish the spirit of holiness according to 4 everlasting truth. They shall atone for guilty rebellion and for sins of unfaithfulness, that they may obtain loving-kindness for the Land without the flesh of holocausts and the fat of sacrifice. And prayer rightly offered shall be as an acceptable fragrance of 5 righteousness, and perfection of way as a delectable free-will offering. At that time, the men of 6 the Community shall set apart a House of Holiness in order that it may be united to the most holy things and a House of Community for Israel, for those who walk in perfection (1QS ix 3–6; cf. 4QS<sup>d</sup> 2 ii 5–6).

This text illustrates *how* the community *become* the communal temple and the site of God’s glory.

The demonstrative pronoun אלה in line 3 is important. That it is plural (‘these’) indicates that its referent is also plural. Since its referent is the ‘Yaḥad of holiness’ (יחד קודש) in line 2, we can already see that the collective nature of the community is at the heart of the message of ix 3–6.

##### 4.2.1.2.1 WHEN THESE COME INTO EXISTENCE

The entire pericope is a single sentence that follows a *when-then* sequence. Lines 3–5a form the protasis and begin with ‘*when* these come into existence’ (בבהיות אלה). Lines 5b–6, which correspond to 3–5a,

form the apodosis and begin with ‘(then) at that time’ (בַּעַת הַהִיא). The subordinate conjunction כִּי prefixed to אֵלֶּה signifies the beginning of this sequence.

A series of events is set into motion *when* the community come together (lines 3–5a). Among these are the atonement for Israel and approval for the land (line 4). Rather than to come to the land through the traditional sacrifices and offerings, they come through the community’s ‘offering of the lips’ and ‘perfectness of behaviour’ (lines 4–5).<sup>22</sup> Notice that Geza Vermes translates line 4 to read ‘without the flesh of holocausts and the fat of sacrifice’. If one were to take the כִּי prefixed to בָּשָׂר and חֵלֶב in the comparative sense, one could then translate this ‘*rather/more effectively than* (כִּי) the flesh of holocausts and *rather/more effectively than* (כִּי) the fat of sacrifice’. The loving-kindness (line 4) and prayer (line 5) have therefore come to take the place of the Jerusalem Temple. Only when the community undertakes such actions do they as a communal (Qumran) temple actively displace the physical (Jerusalem) Temple, thereby becoming the means of atonement for Israel and the land. We deal further with this matter below in §4.3.3.

#### 4.2.1.2.2 (THEN) AT THAT TIME

Lines 5a–6 then add what happens when such actions are undertaken:

(then) at that time they shall set apart (יִבְרִילוּ), the men of the Yāḥad, a house of holiness for Aaron, to be the קֹדֶשׁ of the Holy of Holies and house of holiness for Israel, that is, those who walk in perfection (lines 5a–6, my trans.).

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<sup>22</sup> 1QS viii 9 also mentions liturgical offerings and perfect behaviour as the standard for all who enter the community (e.g. viii 18, 21, 25; ix 2). Cf. CD vi 20; 4Q400 2 7; 4Q403 1 i 39–40; ii 26; *T. Levi* 3.5–6. On morality as the replacement for sacrifices, see Eyal Regev, ‘Temple and Righteousness in Qumran and Early Christianity: Tracing the Social Difference between the Two Movements’, in *Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium on the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature* (STDJ 84; eds. R.A. Clements and D.R. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63–87 [73–5].

The critical verb in this text is **יבדיל** in line 5, the hiphil imperfect of **בדל** ('to separate'). It confirms what we saw above in 1QS viii 4–10: that the community set apart a small cell of elite who shall serve as priestly representatives of the larger sectarian populace. The elite are here identified with the Holy of Holies, the meaning of which will be fleshed out below.

Interestingly, **יבדיל** is found in Ezekiel's prophecy against Gog in Ezek 39.13–14. Through the prophet, God describes events surrounding the day he plans to reveal his glory to the world. Here he proclaims, "And it will bring them honour on the day that I show my glory, says the Lord God. They will set apart men to pass through the land regularly (**תמיד יבדילו**) ... so as to cleanse (**לטהרה**) it [the land]". God promises to reveal his glory, but until that day certain 'men' shall be 'continually set apart' (**תמיד יבדילו**) in order to 'purify the land' (**לטהרה**) on behalf of God's people. Perhaps echoing Ezek 39, 1QS ix 3–6 (and viii 4–10) key out the larger body of people as 'setting apart' a special group to 'purify' the 'land'. Through them God shall presumably reveal his glory to the world.

#### 4.2.1.3 SUMMARY

The mystical nature of Qumran self-conception is slowly becoming apparent, and it will only become clearer as we proceed. We have seen so far the way 1QS viii–ix takes the narrative of the Temple and reapplies it to the sectarian community. The underlying narrative supposes that God no longer resides in Jerusalem but has moved his presence to the wilderness group—specifically to the elite who have been set apart, and by extension the broader sectarian community. This occurs when, in the wilderness, the community 'set apart' (**יבדילו**) their elite to serve in a specialised role (so viii 4–10). At that moment, they as 'a house of holiness for Aaron', 'a Yahad of the Holy of Holies' and 'house of holiness



for Israel' bring atonement and approval to Israel and her land (ix 5a–6, my trans.). While 1QS sets forth this process in a rather straightforward manner, we see below that other works seem to spell out how this process unfolds in a vivid and colourful fashion (see §4.3.3).

#### 4.2.2 UNIO ANGELICA (1QS xi 3–10)

A third description of the community as a temple comes in 1QS xi 3–10.<sup>23</sup> Whereas columns viii–ix more or less *imply* that the community's conception of itself as the substitute temple is mystical, column xi openly describes it as such:

xi 3 כִּי אֶמֶקֶר דַּעַתוֹ פֶּתַח אֹרִי וּבִנְפִלְאוֹתָיו הִבִּיטָה עֵינִי  
וְאוֹרֹתַי לִבִּי בְרוֹן 4 נְהִיָּה 5... וּמִמֶּקֶר צִדְקָתוֹ מִשְׁפָּטִי אֹרִי בִלְבָבִי  
מִרְזִי פֶלֶאֵן בְּהוֹיָא עוֹלָם 6 הִבִּיטָה עֵינִי תוֹשִׁיָּה אֲשֶׁר נִסְתָּרָה  
מֵאֲנוֹשׁ דַּעַת וּמִזִּמְתָּ אֶרְמָה מִבְּנֵי אָדָם מִקֹּר צִדְקָה וּמִקֹּה  
7 גְּבוּרָה עִם מַעִין כְּבוֹד מִסוּד בָּשָׂר לְאֲשֶׁר בָּחַר אֵל נִתְּנָם  
לְאוֹחוֹת עוֹלָם וַיִּנְחִילֵם בְּגוּרָל 8 קְדוּשִׁים וְעִם בְּנֵי שָׁמַיִם חֵבֵר  
סוּדָם לְעִצָּת יָחִיד יִסוּד מִבְּנִית קוֹדֶשׁ לְמִטְעַת עוֹלָם עִם כּוֹל  
9 קֶץ נְהִיָּה וְאֵנִי לְאָדָם רָשָׁעָה וּלְסוּד בָּשָׂר עוֹל עוֹנוֹתַי פִּשְׁעֵי  
חַטָּאתַי... עִם נַעֲוֹת לִבִּי 10 לְסוּד רָמָה וְהוֹלֵכִי חוֹשֶׁךְ

xi 3 For my light has sprung from the source of His knowledge; my eyes have beheld His marvellous deeds, and the light of my heart, the mystery to come [or: 'mystery of existence']. 4 He that is everlasting is the support of my right hand; the way of my steps is over stout rock which nothing shall shake; for the rock of my steps is the truth of God and His might is the support of my right hand. 5 From the source of His righteousness is my justification, and from His marvellous mysteries is the light in my heart. My eyes have gazed on that which is eternal, 6 on wisdom concealed from men, on knowledge and wise design (hidden) from the sons of men; on a fountain of righteousness and on a storehouse of power, on a spring 7 of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. God has given them to His chosen ones as an everlasting possession, and has caused them to inherit the lot 8 of the Holy Ones. He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven to be a Council of the Community, a foundation of the Building of Holiness, and eternal Plantation throughout all 9 ages to come. As for me, I belong to wicked mankind, to the company of unjust flesh. My iniquities, rebellions, and sins, together with the perversity of my heart, 10

<sup>23</sup> 1QS xi is generally understood to be a later addition to the document. However, parallels to this column have been found in Cave 4 manuscripts which can probably be dated palaeographically to 50–25 B.C.E. (i.e. 4QS<sup>i</sup> = 4Q264) and 30–1 B.C.E. (i.e. 4QS<sup>d</sup> = 4Q258). On these manuscripts, see Alexander and Vermes, DJD XXVI, esp. 18–21.

belong to the company of worms and to those who walk in darkness (1QS xi 3–10).

A most intriguing notion begins to emerge at this point. The community are said to join with the ‘holy ones’—or angels—to become a single assemblage. We refer to this experience as one of *unio angelica*, and it is key to their becoming a living temple.

The preposition ל prefixed to עצה and מטעת is critical to the meaning of the passage. It is a *lamed* of purpose, and signifies the *purpose for* the assembly’s celestial union. The two groups unite in order to form a joint council and then, together, to assume the role of God’s temple. Upon uniting together, the two groups become the ‘council of the Yahad’ (לעצה יחד), the ‘foundation of the building of holiness’ (יסוד מבנית) and the ‘eternal planting’ (עולם למטעת, my trans.). 1QS xi 3–10 repeats the claims of viii 4–10 but adds an experiential dimension to the self-identity.<sup>24</sup> The community not only experience *unio angelica* but *unio templi* as well—union with or participation in the spiritual temple. The implication is that the communal temple is somehow constructed of both humans and angels.<sup>25</sup> The יחד לעצה does not come into existence until both humans and angels unite together, and as a single entity they serve in the capacity of the temple.<sup>26</sup> And as we see below, only when the two unite do they serve as God’s place of dwelling.

The view of the יחד [לעצה] as a joint human-angelic assembly is attested outside of 1QS xi. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 19–24, for example, we read:

xi 19 I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou has redeemed my soul from the Pit, and from the hell of Abaddon 20 Thou hast raised me up to everlasting height. I walk on limitless level ground, and I know there is hope for him 21 whom Thou has shaped from dust for the everlasting Council (לסוד עולם). Thou hast cleansed a perverse spirit of great sin that it may stand with 22 the host of the

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Klawans, *Purity*, 166–7.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick A. Tiller, ‘The “Eternal Planting” in the Dead Sea Scrolls’, *DSD* 4 (1997): 312–35 [329].

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Michael Swartz, ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Magic and Mysticism’, *DSD* 8 (2001): 182–93 [183]; Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, 101–10.

Holy Ones, and that it may enter into community with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven.<sup>27</sup> Thou hast allotted to man an everlasting destiny amidst the spirits of 23 knowledge,<sup>28</sup> that he may praise Thy Name in a common (בִּיחָד) rejoicing and recount Thy marvels before all Thy works. And yet I, a creature of 24 clay, what am I (1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 19–24; cf. xix 10–14)?<sup>29</sup>

Like 1QS xi 8, 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 19–24 describe the community as sharing in an experience of *unio angelica*. The speaker/community might unite with the ‘holy ones’ and ‘sons of heaven’, just as they are said to do in 1QS xi 8. As is indicated again by the ל prefix, the purpose is that the two might form the joint council—the Yaḥad. 1QH<sup>a</sup> xiv 12–13 even identifies the angels with whom the community unite ‘without a mediator’ as the ‘angels of the face’.<sup>30</sup>

1QSb iv also describes the union of the human community with the angels of the face:<sup>31</sup>

iv 22 [For] He has chosen you [to] . . . and to number the saints and to [bless] your people . . . 24 the men of the Council of god by your hand, and not by the hand of the prince . . . May you be 25 as an Angel of the Presence in the Abode of Holiness to the glory of the God of [hosts] . . . May you attend upon the service in the Temple of the 26 Kingdom and decree destiny in company with the Angels of the Presence, in common council [with the Holy Ones] for everlasting ages and time without end; for [all] His judgements are [truth] (1QSb iv 22–6)!

To unite with the angels of the face is not just to enter heaven but to enter the celestial throne room of God. As in 1QS xi and 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi, everything begins with the mystical experience.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> להתיצן במעמד עם צבא קודשים ולבוא ביחד עם עדת בני שמים.

<sup>28</sup> ותפל לאיש גורל עולם עם רוחות דעת.

<sup>29</sup> Of the manuscripts comprising the Hodayot or ‘Thanksgiving Hymns’, 1QH<sup>a</sup> dates palaeographically to the second half of the first c. B.C.E. 4QH<sup>b</sup> probably dates between 125–50 B.C.E., while 4QH<sup>c</sup> dates between 50–25 B.C.E. Some scholars even believe Hodayot may have been composed as early as the late-second c. B.C.E. On 1QH<sup>a</sup> see Hartmut Stegemann, Eileen Schuller and Carol Newsom, *Qumran Cave 1.III: 1QHodayot<sup>a</sup> with Incorporation of 1QHodayot<sup>b</sup> and 4QHodayot<sup>a-f</sup>* (DJD XL; Oxford: Clarendon, 2009). Cf. Frank Moore Cross, ‘The Development of the Jewish Scripts, the Bible and the Ancient Near East’, in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of W.F. Albright* (ed. G.E. Wright; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday), 133–202.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Davila, *Works*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> 1QSb probably dates between 125–75 B.C.E. On 1QSb see George J. Brooke, ‘1Q28b, 1QSerekh ha-Yaḥad b (fragment),’ in DJD XXVI, 227–32 [229].

In the Berakhot, too, the community are said to be elevated among the celestial hosts (4Q286 7 i 2–3).<sup>33</sup> As we read, ‘And your kingdom is elevated in the midst of (בְּתוֹךְ) . . . the council of pure divine beings (סִוֵּר אֱלֹהִי מְדַבֵּר) with all those who know eternal things, to praise and to bless the name of your glory for all eternal ages. Amen. Amen’ (4Q286 7 i 5–7, my trans.).<sup>34</sup> None of these texts is entirely clear. But each supports our reading of 1QS viii–xi as a portrait of the community as having united with the angels to form a joint council who will serve together as the divine dwelling place.

#### 4.2.3 THE COMMUNITY AS A TEMPLE DWELLING

Having gained a broader view of 1QS viii–xi, we can now look at some of the more important images noted above. In formulating their communal identity, the community draw from a deposit of terms which had long been used of the Jerusalem Temple. Perhaps the major point of debate has to do with what term 1QS does *not* use to speak of itself as a temple, namely, מִקְדָּשׁ. We thus begin the present portion of our study here.

##### 4.2.3.1 THE ANTHROPOMORPHOUS HOUSE (בֵּית)

Scholars are well aware that 1QS viii–xi does not call the community a מִקְדָּשׁ. This has caused some to question whether or not the community

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Fletcher-Louis, ‘4Q374’, 236–52; idem, ‘Some Reflections on Angelomorphic Humanity Texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls’, *DSD* 7 (2000): 292–312.

<sup>33</sup> Nitzan, ‘Berakhot’, in *DJD* XI, 26. Cf. *CD* iv 3–4; 4Q174 1–2 i 19; 1QH<sup>a</sup> xiv 15; 1QS xi 16; 1QS<sup>a</sup> i 28. 4QBer<sup>a–e</sup> (= 4Q286–290) dates palaeographically to around 1–50 C.E. On an in-depth discussion of 4QBerakhot, see also Bilhah Nitzan, ‘The Textual, Literary and Religious Character of 4QBerakhot (4Q286–290)’, in *Provo International Conference*, 636–56.

<sup>34</sup> See also 1QS xi 3–10; 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 19–24; xix 10–14; 1QSb iv 27–8; 4Q286 7 i 5–7; 1QH<sup>a</sup> iii 21–2; xi 11–12. Reconstructions of 4Q286–90 are those of Bilhah Nitzan, ‘Berakhot’, in *DJD* XI, 1–74. Cf. Nitzan, ‘Harmonic’, 165; eadem, ‘Berakhot’, 27.

believed themselves to be the site of God's presence.<sup>35</sup> We are convinced that the solution to this matter is simple. Rather than a **מִקְדָּשׁ**, the community have chosen a different set of nomenclature in both 1QS and CD iii 19, calling themselves a **בֵּית** instead, reasons for which shall be offered below.

#### 4.2.3.1.1 **בֵּית** AS AN UNSATISFACTORY SOLUTION

Some scholars do not find **בֵּית** to be a satisfactory solution to the problem. Jonathan Klawans, for example, believes that in 1QS viii 5 and 9 **בֵּית** is too ambiguous to support the argument that the community see themselves as some sort of mystical dwelling of God.<sup>36</sup> Firstly, he insists that the bipartite structure of the **בֵּית** of 1QS viii does not fit any other description of the Temple in antiquity. It was always thought to have three parts.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, although **בֵּית** is used of the community in CD iii 19, **מִקְדָּשׁ** is used multiple times in the work (CD i 3; iv 1, 18; v 6; vi 12, 16; xii 1, 2; xx 23).<sup>38</sup> Were the community indeed trying to depict themselves as a temple dwelling, **מִקְדָּשׁ** would surely have been the more plausible term of choice. In Klawans' thinking, 'If the author(s) of CD wanted to say that the community was truly a temple, why not use the word?'<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, Klawans agrees that they believed the divine presence to have resided in the Jerusalem Temple before departing.<sup>40</sup> But he argues that none of the texts scholars generally cite 'explicitly asserts that the divine presence, glory, or name now dwells among the community'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Dimant, '4QFlorilegium', 173.

<sup>36</sup> Klawans, *Purity*, 165–6. Cf. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (WUNT 2.60; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 38.

<sup>37</sup> Klawans, *Purity*, 165–6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

And fourthly, Klawans recognises what we have pointed out already: that the community believed they were living alongside the angels even in this life (e.g. 1QS xi 7–8; 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 21–2; xiv 13). He even agrees that the community thought of themselves as ‘holy beings, perhaps on par with these angels’ (e.g. 1QS viii 17).<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Klawans concludes, none of this supports the argument that the community thought they had superseded the Jerusalem Temple and become the site of God’s dwelling.

#### 4.2.3.1.2 THE VERSATILITY OF בֵּית

Klawans’ arguments are well taken. However, he greatly undervalues the significance of the terms we *do* find in 1QS viii–xi. It would serve him well, we suggest, to give more attention to the temple imagery of 1QS viii–xi than to turn to CD so quickly. In 1QS viii–xi, after all, we find significant temple imagery being reapplied to the community (see §4.2.1). And all of this is underlain by a peculiarly mystical bent. Given the fact that in 1QS, as Klawans himself admits, the community thought they lived in shared space with the angels, and based on the many temple-terms the community do use to describe themselves, we suggest there *is* strong evidence in 1QS viii–xi to argue that the community viewed themselves as a temple in the sense that they already were, or were to become, the dwelling of God’s presence.

Further still, in this context בֵּית more fittingly communicates the community-as-temple doctrine than מִקְדָּשׁ. Like מִקְדָּשׁ, בֵּית can signify a ‘house’ or ‘structure’—even the house of God (1 Chron 22; 1 Kgs 8). Yet what בֵּית has that מִקְדָּשׁ does not have is the ability to denominate a living ‘household’ or ‘dynasty’ (Gen 7.1; 12.17; 2 Sam 7.11–19; 2 Kgs 17.21; Ezek 40.4; 43.7, 10). In other words, בֵּית commixes the notion of the Lord’s temple with that of a human community into a single term. It is

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

not difficult to see why 1QS viii 5, 9 and ix 6 identify the community with the בית. For while מקדש requires the modifier אדם to convey the notion of a 'human temple', this double meaning is intrinsic to בית.

Lastly, to use the term מקדש to describe themselves would in many ways be a step backwards for the community. *That* building was no longer sufficient to do what God originally built it to do. It was precisely the מקדש which they thought themselves to have replaced. So the community believed it their calling to become not only its substitution, but something even greater. They were the present, eschatological remnant who were presently the site of God's dwelling on earth. There is not a single term, and certainly not מקדש, which could truly quantify this new identity and new experience. It thus took a complex of terms to do so, beginning with בית.

#### 4.2.3.2 THE HOLY OF HOLIES (קודש קודשים)

In addition to a House, 1QS viii also calls the community the 'Holy of Holies' (קודש קודשים). When considered alongside of House, Holy of Holies becomes the most telling designation for the community found in sectarian literature. For ancient Jews were aware that God's glory dwelt in fullest concentration not in the House (בית) or Temple (מקדש) per se, but in the Holy of Holies (Exod 26.33–4; 1Kgs 6.16).

When Holy of Holies appears in 1QS viii 5–6, it refers specifically to the elite said to have been set apart in lines 1–4. They are the '*foundation/assembly* of the Holy of Holies for Aaron', the inner precinct of the communal temple. By delineating between the House and the Holy of Holies, 1QS establishes a socio-mystical hierarchy of sorts. The broader community are the House, while the elite are the Holy of Holies.<sup>43</sup> Line 5

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<sup>43</sup> Wardle, *Jerusalem Temple*, 157.

also juxtaposes Aaron (אֹהֲרֹן) with Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל). The point is that the House as a whole are the broader Israelite community (יִשְׂרָאֵל), and the Holy of Holies are the Aaronic-priestly elite (אֹהֲרֹן).

The mystical nature of this depiction becomes even clearer in lines 8–9. Here the elite are literally called a ‘dwelling’ (בַּעֲוֹן), a term which in both Scripture and the DSS unambiguously refers to *God’s dwelling*.<sup>44</sup> That 1QS viii and x call the community a ‘dwelling’ would thus seem to put to rest any doubts as to whether or not they thought of themselves as the *dwelling* of God’s presence.

#### 4.2.3.3 THE ANTHROPOMORPHOUS FOUNDATION (סֹד)

The term סֹד is used of the sectarian community several times in 1QS viii–xi. In both biblical and sectarian thought, סֹד and cognates carry the idea of an ‘assembly’, ‘foundation’ or ‘secret counsel’. 1QS employs the family of terms somewhat ambiguously (cf. CD xiv 10; xix 35). It appears five times in column xi alone, where it refers *both* to gatherings of people (lines 7, 8, 9 and 10) *and* to temple structures (line 8). 1QS xi 8–9 even seems to indicate that the ‘foundation’ and the ‘assembly’ are one and the same. As we read, God has united ‘their [the sectarian] assembly’ (סֹדָם) with the angels ‘to form a council of Yahad and *foundation/assembly* of the building of holiness’ (לַעֲצַת יַחַד וְסֹד מְבִנִּית קֹדֶשׁ, my trans.).

סֹד is used similarly in 1QS viii 5–8. Here it describes the community literally as ‘an everlasting plantation, a house of holiness for Israel, and the סֹד of the Holy of Holies for Aaron (lines 5–6) . . . whose סֹדוֹתֵיהֶם will not shake or tremble from their place’ (line 8). The plural

<sup>44</sup> On God’s בַּעֲוֹן, see Deut 26.15; 1Sam 2.29, 32; 2Chron 30.27; 36.15; Ps 26.8; 68.5(6); Jer 25.30; Zech 2.13(17); 1QS x 1, 3, 12; 1QSb iv 24–6; 1QM; 1QH<sup>a</sup>; Sabbath Shirot.



יְסֻדוֹתֵיהֶן ('foundations') probably refers to the elite in viii 1–4. They are the unshakable 'foundations' who comprise the Holy of Holies.<sup>45</sup> In each of these columns, one could easily take סֹד to refer either to the assembly of people or to the structure of the temple. This would appear to be a clear case of mystical empowerment, as would be many of the terms with which the community have chosen to speak of themselves (see §1.2.4).

The suggestion that the community conceived of themselves as an anthropomorphous 'foundation' (סֹד) finds further support from two other images found in 1QS viii 7–8. These images emerge from a citation of Isa 28.16. Each text reads as follows:

1QS viii 7–8: This is the wall of testing (חֹמַת הַבְּחִן), the precious cornerstone (פִּנֵּת יָקָר) that does not . . . Its foundations (יְסֻדוֹתֵיהֶן) neither shake nor tremble from their place (my trans.).

Isa 28.16: therefore thus says the Lord GOD, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts (lit.: 'the one being sure—הַמֵּאֲמִין) will not panic [or 'be shaken']'.

The images of the 'precious cornerstone' and 'wall' (of stones) find a new significance in 1QS viii, where they refer to the sectarian community.

#### 4.2.3.3.1 THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE (פִּנֵּת יָקָר)

Firstly, by adopting the image of the 'precious cornerstone' (פִּנֵּת יָקָר), the community take upon themselves the identity of Isaiah's eschatological remnant. Paul Swarup explains that this image allowed the community to see themselves as the long-awaited remnant, and as a 'proleptic community enjoying a foretaste of the coming righteous reign of God'.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Schofield, *Qumran*, 110–11; cf. Alexander and Vermes, DJD XXVI, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Paul N.W. Swarup, *The Self-Understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls Community: An Eternal Planting, A House of Holiness* (LSTS 59; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 171.

This image was valuable to early Christian identity for the same reason. Eph 2.19–22 is a clear instance in which Christians apply this image to themselves in speaking of their community as God’s spiritual dwelling. The text uses the term ἀκρογωνιαίον (‘chief cornerstone’) of Christ (LXX Isa 28.16; cf. 1Pet 2.6; LXX Isa 8.14), and the Christian community as ‘members of the *household* of God’ (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ) and the ‘*dwelling* of God by means of the Spirit’ (κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>47</sup> The Christian community, together with Christ himself, comprise the spiritual dwelling of God. Christ is the ‘chief cornerstone’, while believers are the other parts of this *dwelling*. All of this is made possible by means of the permeating presence of the Spirit.

#### 4.2.3.3.2 THE WALL (חֹמֶה) OF STONES

Secondly, that 1QS viii 7 replaces אֶבֶן (‘stone’) with חֹמֶה (‘wall’) marks a significant move on the part of the sectarian community. Although קִיר (not חֹמֶה) generally refers to the ‘wall’ of the Temple (Lev 14.37, 39; Ezek 41.5, 6, 9; 43.8), and חֹמֶה describes the wall around Jerusalem (1Kgs 9.15; 2Chr 36.19; Neh 3.8), 1QS has chosen חֹמֶה as a synecdoche for the *sanctuary*. As Swarup writes, ‘The “stone” imagery has now become “wall” imagery facilitating a collective and corporate idea indicating that together they formed the sanctuary’.<sup>48</sup> The DSS employ חֹמֶה to refer not just to inanimate structures but to living beings as well (cf. 1QSb v 23; 1QH<sup>a</sup> iii 37; xv 8, 9; cf. 1QH<sup>a</sup> vi 25; vii 8). When 1QS viii 7 calls the community a wall of ‘stones’, it thus intimates that only as a collective group do the members of the community form the temple’s structure.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ibid., 201. Greek NT text is taken from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 172; cf. Gärtner, *Temple*, 27 n 1; Wernberg-Møller, *Manual*, 126.

#### 4.2.3.4 THE ETERNAL PLANTING (מטעת עולם)

1QS viii 5 refers further to the community as an ‘eternal planting’ (מטעת עולם), once again based on its twofold significance.<sup>49</sup> Like the others discussed above, the ‘eternal planting’ had long been associated with both the eschatological remnant and with the place of God’s dwelling. Isa 60 uses מטע (and חורמה) in reference to the eschatological remnant among whom God shall dwell in the future (vv. 18–21). Ezek 34 calls the wilderness a ‘planting’ (מטע), the place to which God’s people will go to live in safety (v. 25).<sup>50</sup>

That 1QS viii 4–6 juxtaposes the image with the ‘house of holiness’ and the ‘Holy of Holies’ indicates that the composers are using the image in the attempt to designate the community as God’s long-awaited place of dwelling.<sup>51</sup> Certainly this usage aligns with a statement in Jub 1.16–17, where God promises Israel, ‘I will transform them into a righteous plant with all my mind and all my soul. . . . I will build my temple among them and will live among them; I will become their God and they will become my true and righteous people’ (cf. Jer 32.41).<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, the ‘eternal planting’ probably has ties to the Garden of Eden (1QH<sup>a</sup> xvi 4–26; xiv 16; 4Q500 1; cf. Isa 5.1–7).<sup>53</sup> For, again, Jubilees explicitly associates Eden with the Temple.<sup>54</sup> Jub 8.19 reports

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<sup>49</sup> On מטע in the HB, see Isa 60.21; 61.3; Ezek 17.7; 31.4; 34.29; Mic 1.6. Cf. Tiller, ‘Planting’, 326–29 on 1QS.

<sup>50</sup> On land in ancient Judaism, see N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (COQG 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 226–7.

<sup>51</sup> Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 62.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 62–3 (trans. James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: Translated* [CSCO 511; SA 88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989], 4–5).

<sup>53</sup> Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 64–5; Wardle, *Jerusalem Temple*, 152–3; George J. Brooke, ‘Miqdash Adam, Eden and the Qumran Community’, in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Community without Temple* (WUNT 2.118; ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 285–301 [292–5].

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Martha Himmelfarb, ‘The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira’, in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (CSR 30; eds. J.S. Scott and P. Simpson-Housley; New York: Greenwood, 1991), 63–78; C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish*

that 'the garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord'.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.2.4 SUMMARY

1QS viii–xi is almost certainly a depiction of the community's view of themselves as the wilderness remnant who shall (or have) become the site of God's glorious presence. Even though **מקדש** does not appear in 1QS in reference to the community as a dwelling of God, many other images are found to be used in this very sense. These terms come in the form of a list of temple-based images which are being reapplied to the community.

Granted, one could still separate the blatantly mystical language of 1QS xi from the more ambiguous language of columns viii–ix and conclude that the depictions of the community are not mystical at all, but merely metaphorical. However, when we take a step back and view the portrait of columns viii–xi on the whole, and then place these within the broader framework of Qumran sectarian thought as represented by other works (with which we deal in §4.3), our reading of 1QS becomes rather unavoidable. What remains to be seen at this point, therefore, is the mystical-transformative nature of this community-as-temple identity, to which we now turn.

### 4.3 ONTOLOGICAL CHANGE IN SECTARIAN THOUGHT

1QS viii–xi depict the community as a type of temple-dwelling of God. Column viii separates the broader community who constitute the House from the elite who make up the Holy of Holies. Column ix then describes

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*Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 88–93; Morray-Jones, 'Temple', 168; William R.G. Loader, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality: Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Sectarian and Related Literature at Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 230–1; Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 64.

the role of the community's performance of the liturgical offerings as the means by which they realise their role as the temple. And column xi adds that humans are not alone in the communal-temple schema, insisting that the edifice does not even come into being until the community have united with the angels to form a single group. At that point the joint human-angelic council *become*—or *realise* their inherent potential to become—the site of God's glorious dwelling, his living temple.

Moreover, based on the predominant *construction* language used of the community, one should be inclined to think that *the way they realise their role as the temple would have something to do with its construction as well*. This suggestion, interestingly, will find support shortly below in our analysis of the Sabbath Shirot. Thus whereas 1QS viii–xi present a rudimentary portrait of the community as a temple, three other works shed light on the place of mystical transformation in this self-understanding. These works include the Self-Glorification Hymn, 4Q174 (Florilegium) and the Sabbath Shirot. A brief discussion of these is now in order.

#### **4.3.1 SELF-GLORIFICATION HYMN (4Q491c 1–2, 4Q471b, 4Q427 7, 1QH<sup>a</sup> xxvi)**

While it does not address the community-as-temple doctrine directly, the so-called Self-Glorification Hymn offers insight into sectarian conceptions of mystical transformation that apply directly to what we observed above in 1QS. Four versions of the Hymn have been identified: 4Q491c 1–2, 4Q471b, 4Q427 7 and 1QH<sup>a</sup> xxvi.<sup>56</sup> 4Q491c probably dates to the second half of the first century B.C.E., along with 1QH<sup>a</sup> xxvi and 4Q471b, while 4Q427 7 is slightly earlier and belongs to the first half of the same

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<sup>56</sup> James Davila, 'Heavenly Ascents in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment, Volume 1* (eds. P.W. Flint; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 461–85, esp. 473–6.

century.<sup>57</sup> Based on the number of manuscripts and their dispersion throughout other manifestly sectarian works, we can safely regard the Hymn as itself sectarian.

We rely primarily on 4Q491c 1 5–11, supplementing it with others when necessary, most notably in the hero's question discussed shortly below.<sup>58</sup> The Hymn reads as follows:

1 5 עולמים כסא עוז בעדת אלים כל ישובו בו כול מלכי  
קדם ונדיביהמה לוא ... א דומי 6 ... כבודי לוא ידמה ולוא  
ירומם זולתי ולוא יבוא ביאכיא אני ישבתי ב ... ה בשמים ואין  
7 { ... סב } יבום אני עם אלים אתחשב ומכוני בעדת קודש  
לוא כבשר תאותי כיא כול יקר לי בכבוד 8 ... מעון  
הקודש ומיא בכבודי ידמה לוא מיא הוא כבאי ים ישוב וספר  
9 ... תו מיא ישא כול צערים כמוני ומיאיסבול רע הדמה ביא  
ואין נשניתי והוריה לוא תדמה 10 בהוריתי ומיא יגודניא  
בפתחי פיא יכיל ומיא יועדני וידמה במשפטי 11 ... ידיד  
המלך רע לקדושים ... ידמה כיא אניא עם אלים מעמדי  
וכבודי עם בני המלך

1 5 a mighty throne in the congregation of the Elim above which none of the kings of the East shall sit, and their nobles not ... silence 6 ... My glory is incomparable, and no one is exalted besides me, and no one comes to me, *because* I alone have dwelt ... in heaven, and no one surrounds me 7 ... I with the Elim, and my dwelling is in the holy congregation. My desire is not as flesh, *because* all that is precious to me is in the glory of 8 ... the holy dwelling. Who has been considered despicable on my account? And who is comparable to me in my glory? Who, like the sailors, will come back and tell? 9 ... Who bears all sorrows like me? And who suffers evil like me? There is no-one. I have been instructed, and there is no teaching comparable 10 to my teaching ... And who will attack me when I open my mouth? And who can endure the flow of my lips? And who will confront me and retain comparison with my judgment? 11 ... friend of the king, companion of the holy ones ... incomparable, for I with the Elim is my standing, and my glory is with the sons of the king ... (4Q491c 1 5–11).<sup>59</sup>

The hero of this Hymn claims to have been elevated to heaven. He has received divine instructions and, more importantly, undergone what we suggest is an ontological change. Much of the hero's language resembles

<sup>57</sup> Jean Duhaime, *The War Texts: 1QM and Related Manuscripts* (CQS 6; London: T & T Clark, 2004), 40–1.

<sup>58</sup> Maurice Baillet, *Qumrân grotte 4.III (4Q482–4Q520)* (DJD VII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 26–30.

<sup>59</sup> Trans. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Study Edition*.

that found in 1QS xi 3–10, where the speaker claims also to have received instruction from God (lines 5–6) and taken a place among the angels (lines 7–9).

#### 4.3.1.1 *NO ONE SURROUNDS ME*

In Michael Wise's view, the hero believes he is exalted so far above 'those who surround him that, in effect, they do not surround him at all; he has no peers in the angelic council'.<sup>60</sup> His transcendent elevation motivates him to ask in 4Q427 7 8, 'Who is like me among the Elim?' (מִי כַמוֹנִי בְּאֵלִים; 4Q427 7 8; cf. Num 16.5; Isa 46.9; Jer 49.19). Interestingly, the hero goes on to answer his own question. He has become so highly exalted in heaven that he is now 'incomparable' (לֹא יִדְמָה).

In fact, the hero claims incomparability on a number of grounds. Most important is his claim in lines 6 and 8 to be incomparable 'in glory' (בְּכְבוֹד).<sup>61</sup> He is unlike any other 'because of' (כִּי־) his unique experience in heaven (cf. lines 6–7, 11). Having been seated on a throne among the Elim and having made heaven his 'dwelling', the hero now possesses incomparable 'glory'.

#### 4.3.1.2 *MY DESIRE IS NOT AS FLESH*

There is probably a link between the hero's 'incomparable glory' and his peculiar claim, 'My desire is not as flesh' (לֹא כַבֶּשֶׂר תַּאֲוָתִי), because all that is precious to me is in the glory of . . . the holy dwelling' (הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִעוֹן). When he asserts that his desire is no longer 'as flesh' (כַּבֶּשֶׂר), we are reminded of Enoch's response to his son Mefusalom after being transformed in heaven. Mefusalom prepares a meal for his father Enoch,

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<sup>60</sup> Wise, 'מִי כַמוֹנִי', 187.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *T. Levi* 3.5–7; *T. Jud.* 25.2; *Jub* 2.2, 18; 15.27; 31.14; 1QSb iv 23–25.

but Enoch refuses, explaining that since being anointed in glory he no longer ‘desires’ to eat human food (2 En. 56.2 [A]). Like the hero, Enoch’s transformation has seemingly extinguished his fleshly desires.

#### 4.3.1.3 ALL THAT IS PRECIOUS TO ME

Rather than desiring fleshly things, all that is now ‘precious’ to the hero lies ‘in the glory of . . . the holy dwelling’. His experience of heaven has apparently had a residual effect on him in that he has taken a semi-permanent place in heaven even in this life.<sup>62</sup> This suggestion certainly seems a bit absurd, but it does find attestation again in 2 En. In 2 En. 22, for example, Enoch enters heaven and becomes indistinguishable from the angels around him (vv. 8–10). What must not be missed is that from that day on Enoch remains *a permanent resident of heaven* (2 En. 36.3). Although he crosses back and forth from earth to heaven for a while, towards the end of the narrative he is finally taken up to live there forever.<sup>63</sup> Heavenly experiences of this sort thus seems to have lasting effects on one’s ontological state of being.

#### 4.3.1.4 EARTH OUTSIDE, HEAVEN INSIDE

Even though *outwardly* the hero and Enoch appear like other humans, *inwardly* they have undergone lasting ontological change. The Hymn’s hero is changed *inside*, but like the speakers of 1QS xi and 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi, his *outward* body remains the same (see §4.2.2).<sup>64</sup> Thus while the person

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<sup>62</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, 14–6, 213; cf. Joseph L. Angel, ‘The Liturgical-Eschatological Priest of the *Self-Glorification Hymn*’, *RevQ* 96 (2010): 585–605 [592–6]; Phoebe Makiello, *Is the origin of the concept of angelic priesthood at Qumran as depicted in the Sabbath Shirot to be found in Levi tradition texts? If so, what can this tell us about the function of the Sabbath Shirot?* (The Queen’s College, Oxford University: Master’s Dissertation, 2008), 9.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 6; Andrei A. Orlov, ‘Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch’, *JSP* (1998): 71–86 [78–9].

<sup>64</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, 476.



experiences heaven inwardly, his or her body remains plagued by sin and corruption (cf. 2 Cor 4.16–18; see §5.1.2.2).

The ontological implications of this text are profound. Qumran sectarians believed there to be a distinction between one's inward and outward states of being. According to 4Q491c 1 7–8, the hero's experience of heaven began with his enthronement in the *past* but is having *present* effects *inside him*. This person is fully present outwardly on earth but can legitimately claim 'to dwell' (אֵתְּחַשֵּׁב)<sup>65</sup> in heaven 'with the Elim'. As a heavenly being, this person is no longer governed by fleshly desires, for what is 'precious' lies in the heavenly 'glory' he or she now possesses.

#### 4.3.2 4Q174 (FLORILEGIUM)

4Q174 asserts a view of the community as a communal temple similar to that found in 1QS viii–xi. The two works use different terms to speak of this doctrine.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the two portraits correspond in critical ways.

##### 4.3.2.1 OVERVIEW OF 4Q174

4Q174 dates to the early first c. C.E. It consists of some 26 fragments constituting five columns. Based on its overlap in terminology and eschatology with other known sectarian works, there is little doubt as to its sectarian provenance.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Or 'to have been made to dwell'.

<sup>66</sup> Reconstruction of 4Q174 follows that of John M. Allegro, '4QFlorilegium', in *Qumran Cave 4.I (4Q158–4Q186)* (DJD V; Oxford: OUP, 1968), 53–7 and plates XIX–XX.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Jacob Milgrom, 'Florilegium: A Midrash on 2 Samuel and Psalms 1–2', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, Volume 6: Pesharim, Other Commentaries, and Related Documents* (PTSDSSP; eds. J.H. Charlesworth and F.M. Cross; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 248–63; Stegemann, 'Die Bedeutung', 510–11;

4Q174 1 i 21 2 1–19 is a midrash on 2 Sam 7.10–14, as understood alongside Exod 15.17–18 and Amos 9.11. In 2 Sam 7 the Lord famously promises to David that in the future he will establish a ‘house’ for him that will ‘endure forever’ (v. 16). In this house, David’s descendants will find eternal rest and safety from their enemies (4Q174 1 i 21 2 1–11).

4Q174 understands 2 Sam 7.10–14 as a description of three temples.<sup>68</sup> The first, that of Solomon, no longer exists and is thus rendered ineffective. The next is the Second Temple, which still stands but is no longer worthy to serve as the site of God’s house or of the sacrificial service. The third, then, is the so-called **מקדש אדם** (‘human temple’), the meaning of which we shall discuss briefly.

Reference to the **מקדש אדם** comes in 4Q174 1 i 21 2 6–7, where we read:

ויואמר לבנות לוא מקדש אדם להיות מקטירים בוא לוא לפניו מעשי תודה

And he promises to build for himself **מקדש אדם**, that they may become those who cause *sacrificial-smoke*—the works of thanksgiving—to rise in it, for him, before his face (my trans.).

We understand this as a remark about the community as God’s ‘human temple’, but we are aware that this is not the consensus view. To take a strong example, Wise argues that **מקדש אדם** refers not to a human temple but to an actual building to be built in the future.<sup>69</sup> Translating this to read ‘the temple of Adam’, Wise insists it has to do with sectarian hopes for a restored Eden and a return to a lost Adamic state *in the future*, not the present.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, ‘The Three Temples of 4QFlorilegium’, *RevQ* 10/37 (1979): 83–91.

<sup>69</sup> Michael O. Wise, ‘That which has been is that which shall be: 4QFlorilegium and the **מקדש אדם**’, in *Thunder at Gemini: And Other Essays on the History, Language and Literature of Second Temple Judaism* (JSPSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 152–85.

<sup>70</sup> Wise, ‘**מקדש אדם**’, 174–85.

#### 4.3.2.2 מקדש אדם IN 4Q174

However, the מקדש אדם may be understood as another way the sectarians have chosen to speak of themselves as the place of God's residence. Firstly, there is some debate as to how to understand the Hebrew at the end of 4Q174 1 i 21 2 7. Are we to take this as מעשי תורה ('works of thanksgiving') or מעשי תורה ('works of Torah')? Since we cannot determine from the handwriting whether it is a ד or ר, we are not in a position to argue decisively for either translation on such grounds. However, based on community's understanding of their own praise, one could plausibly opt for the reading מעשי תורה ('works of thanksgiving'; cf. 1QS ix 3–6).<sup>71</sup> What 1QS ix 4 calls 'the offering of the lips', in other words, 4Q174 refers to as the 'works of thanksgiving'. Both designate the praise of the community as the substitute for the currently invalidated sacrifices.<sup>72</sup>

Interestingly, where we expect to read that the מקדש אדם offer up the smoke to God, we actually learn that the מקדש אדם are themselves 'to be' (להיות) those who cause the (liturgical) smoke to rise. The plural להיות in reference to the מקדש אדם suggests that the מקדש is pluralistic in nature, being comprised of multiple human beings (אדם).

Secondly, like 1QS viii–xi, 4Q174 also refers to the community as a 'house' (בית). The double meaning of בית discussed above can be detected even in 2 Sam 7, where it refers both to the Temple and to the Davidic dynasty (see §4.3.2.1).<sup>73</sup> As in 1QS viii–xi, so also in 4Q174 the

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Milgrom, 'Florilegium', 248–63; George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context* (JSOTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 92; Klawans, *Purity*, 162–3; García-Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Study Edition*, 353. But see Vermes, *CDSSE*: '... that there they may send up, like the smoke of incense, the works of the Law'.

<sup>72</sup> But see קטר in rabbinic usage, where it refers to the occupation in Torah, not praise (*b. Men.* 110a; *b. Ber.* 7a). Cf. Jastrow 1352.

<sup>73</sup> Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 119–20.

image of the 'house' conveys the idea of a *community* who are also a *temple*.

Thirdly, 4Q174 1 i 21 2 2–3 and 10–14 add that it is not humans who construct the **מִקְדָּשׁ אֱלֹהִים**, but it is God himself.<sup>74</sup> In the last days, God will establish with his own hands the 'Temple of the Lord' (so Exod 15.17–18). This sentiment is echoed in the Temple Scroll, where we read:

I will cause my glory to rest on it (the interim sanctuary) until the day of creation on which I shall create my sanctuary, establishing it for myself for all time according to the covenant which I have made with Jacob in Bethel (11QTa xxix 9–10).<sup>75</sup>

In other words, the community shall become the 'house' of God's dwelling in the interim period that will end when the Lord finally re-builds his new sanctuary.

While 4Q174 does not outright state, 'The community are God's Temple', it makes such a claim through its creative exegesis of 2 Sam 7. Based on the probable link between the 'works of thanksgiving' in 4Q174 and the 'offering of the lips' in 1QS viii–xi, and on the imagery of the community as a 'house' in both works, it is reasonable to understand 4Q174 as describing the sectarian community as the present, eschatological substitute for the defiled Jerusalem Temple and the embodiment of the priesthood and the sacrificial service just as 1QS viii–xi describes. In this human temple, God's presence shall dwell *even in this life*.

Swarup, who makes many fine exegetical points on 4Q174, aptly summarises:

For the DSS community the dwelling of God in their midst, as in the tabernacle during Israel's journey through the wilderness, was part of their self-understanding. This, in turn, led to very strict rules of purity. They saw themselves fulfilling the role of True Israel. The exegetical principles observed by the commentator here have one purpose in mind: to legitimise the claim that

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 119–20.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Ibid., 120.

the DSS community were now fulfilling the role of the temple where God's presence was ever present.<sup>76</sup>

Reading 4Q174 alongside 1QS viii–xi is truly illuminating. While 1QS viii–xi calls the community the House of Holiness and Holy of Holies, 4Q174 calls them a Human Temple (מִקְדָּשׁ אָדָם).<sup>77</sup> Using different language, each text describes the community as the dwelling of God, his temple made of human beings.

### 4.3.3 THE SABBATH SHIROT (4Q400–07 AND 11Q17)

The final work we explore in this chapter is the Sabbath Shirot. This work contains what is probably the most famous account of the celestial Temple in all the DSS. Further still, after discussing sectarian conceptions of *unio angelica* and *unio templi* as found in 1QS viii–xi, a treatment of Shirot seems critical. For as will become clear, it is in Shirot where such conceptions find their most colourful expression.

#### 4.3.3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SABBATH SHIROT

The Sabbath Shirot consists of thirteen 'songs' to be sung consecutively, one each Sabbath, over the course of the first thirteen weeks of the year. Each song originally contained a rubric indicating that the work was intended for use in a liturgical setting. Ten copies of Shirot have been recovered at Cave 4 (4Q400–07) and one at Cave 11 (11Q17) at Qumran, while a single fragment has been taken from the Masada site (Mas1k).<sup>78</sup> Most of the manuscripts date to the first centuries B.C.E. to C.E.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Swarup, *Self-Understanding*, 121.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Devorah Dimant, 'Qumran Sectarian Literature', in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (CRINT 2.2: LJPSTT; ed. Michael Stone; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 483–550 [520].

<sup>78</sup> Unless otherwise noted, reconstructions of the Sabbath Shirot are those of Newsom, *Critical Edition*; eadem, DJD XI, 173–401, for the reasons she gives there. On

Debate remains as to whether Shirot can be viewed as ‘sectarian’. In her earlier work, Newsom had reservations regarding the work’s Qumran provenance, but she has more recently changed her position. She now maintains that even though the work may be a sectarian composition, ‘there is good grounds for thinking that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice functioned as an adopted or naturalized text within the sectarian perspective of the Qumran community’.<sup>80</sup> Given its basic thematic overlap with sectarian works like Berakhot, Hodayot and, as we shall see, Serekh ha-Yahad, and based on its proximity to other sectarian works in Qumran Cave 4, it seems reasonable to view the Sabbath Shirot as a valuable representative of sectarian thought and practice, regardless of whether or not it was actually composed by Qumran sectarians.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.3.3.2 THE SABBATH SHIROT AS A MYSTICAL LITURGY

Whereas 1QS viii–xi describes the mystical experience of the community, Shirot illustrates *how this experience takes place*. 1QS viii–xi offers a monochromatic description of the community’s union with the angels and formation as God’s spiritual dwelling. Shirot, however, seems to have given the community a means by which to realise their role as the dwelling of God. In Newsom’s words, Shirot serves as a ‘quasi-mystical

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4Q403 and 4Q405, see John Strugnell, ‘The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran: 4QSerek Širôt ‘Ôlat Haššabbāt’, in *Congress Volume, Oxford 1959* (VTSup 7; ed. G.W. Anderson; Leiden: Brill, 1960), 318–45. On Cave 11 manuscripts, see Adam S. van der Woude, ‘Fragments einer Rolle der Lieder für das Sabbatopfer aus Höhle XI von Qumran (11QŠirŠabb)’, in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. J.P.M van der Ploeg O.P. zur Vollendung des siebsigsten Lebensjahres am 4 Juli 1979* (eds. J.P.M van der Ploeg and W.C. Delsman; AOAT 211; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 311–37. On the Masada fragment, see Yigael Yadin, ‘The Excavation at Masada; 1963/64 Preliminary Report’, *IEJ* 15 (1965): 105–8.

<sup>79</sup> Newsom, *Critical Edition*, 1, 168, 363; Davila, *Works*, 83–167.

<sup>80</sup> Newsom, ‘Explicit’, 185. In fact, over the last couple of decades, Newsom has changed her position not only on the provenance of the Sabbath Shirot but on the interpretation of them as well.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–85; cf. eadem, *Critical Edition*.

liturgy designed to evoke a sense of being present in the heavenly temple'.<sup>82</sup>

By reading the work in context with 1QS, we press Newsom's understanding of Shirot somewhat further. We suggest that it did not just evoke a sense of 'being present in the heavenly temple', but instead it created a sense of *participating in or being part of* that heavenly temple. In other words, Shirot promote the same experience of *unio angelica* and *unio templi* that we observed in 1QS. This becomes especially clear when one observes the highly liturgical and ritual character of the opening columns of the work. 4Q400 1 i 2 opens with a call to 'praise' (הלל) God and proceeds to exalt him in his celestial splendour. And though a very general point of contact, it is important that both 4Q400 1 i 1 and 1QS i 1 open with an address 'to the Maskil' (למשכיל).

#### 4.3.3.2.1 THE NARRATIVE FLOW OF THE SABBATH SHIROT

Understanding the narrative flow of Shirot is critical to understanding how it presents what we suggest is its chief aim: to assist the community in their construction of God's anthropomorphous house. The work divides into three parts. The first (Songs 1–5) begins with a description of the angels (Song 1) and ends with a glimpse at their liturgy (Song 5). In focus here are the angels, though humans make brief appearance especially in Song 2. The notable feature of Songs 1–5 is that there is a clear distinction between humans and angels.

Songs 6–8 then mark the second unit of the cycle. Here the line separating humans from the angels becomes blurred.<sup>83</sup> Union between

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<sup>82</sup> Newsom, *Critical Edition*, 59; cf. eadem, 'Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice', in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Volume 2: N–Z* (eds. L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam; Oxford: OUP, 2000), 887–9; eadem, "'He Has Established For Himself Priests": Human and Angelic Priesthood in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot', in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (JSPSup 8; JSOT/ASORMS 2; eds. L.H. Schiffman and Y. Yadin; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 101–20 [115–6].

humans and angels has apparently taken place, leading to the formation of something of a joint worshipping council. Indeed, the joint council is quite similar to that which we observed above in 1QS xi 3–10, 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 19–24 and 1QSb iv 22–8.<sup>84</sup>

There is a tripartite confusion of boundaries that begins in Song 6 and extends through to the end of Song 12 (or 13). The ontological bounds separating humans from angels, and then both humans and angels from the celestial temple, overlap with one another in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish one from the other.<sup>85</sup> The doctrine of *unio angelica* and *unio templi* of 1QS viii–xi is now colourfully and artistically expressed in Shirot. In fact, much of the architectural language noted above in §4.2.3 reappears in Shirot. This becomes especially clear in the latter parts of Shirot (Songs 7–13), as we will now see.

#### 4.3.3.2.2 *UNIO ANGELICA* AND *UNIO TEMPLI* IN THE SABBATH SHIROT

Several examples from part three of Shirot elucidate the community's experience of ontological boundary confusion, which results in an experience of *unio angelica* and, subsequently, of *unio templi*. Song 7 articulates, for example:

i 41 With these let all the *foundations of the holy* of holies praise, the uplifting pillars of the supremely lofty abode, and all the corners of its structure. Sing praise 42 to God who is *Dreadful* in power, *all you spirits* of knowledge and light in order to exalt together the splendidly shining firmament of His holy sanctuary. 43 *Give praise to Him*, O you godlike spirits, *in order to praise* for ever and ever the firmament of the uppermost heaven, all *its beams* and its walls, all *its form*, the work of 44 its structure. The spirits of eternal holiness above godlike ones, the spirits of eternal holiness above 45 all the holy ones . . . wonder, wonderful with *majesty* and splendor and wonder. And *the glory is* in the most perfect light, knowledge . . . *in all* the wondrous sanctuaries; the godlike spirits *are* round about the abode of the King of truth and righteousness. All its walls . . .

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<sup>83</sup> Boustán, 'Architecture', 195–212.

<sup>84</sup> On the overlap between 1QH<sup>a</sup> xi 21–23 and the Sabbath Shirot, see Judith H. Newman, 'Priestly Prophets at Qumran: Summoning Sinai through the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*', in *Significance of Sinai*, 29–72.

<sup>85</sup> Boustán, 'Architecture', 195–212.



ii 12 And the voice of blessing is heard is glorious in the hearing of the godlike beings and the councils of . . . 13 *voice of blessing*. And all the crafted furnishings of the debir hasten to join with wondrous psalms in the debir . . . 14 of wonder, debir to debir with the sound of holy multitudes. And all their crafted furnishings . . . 15 And the chariots of His debir give praise together, and their cherubim and their ophanim bless wondrously . . . 16 the chiefs of the divine *structure*. And they praise Him in His holy debir (4Q403 1 i 41–5; ii 12–6).

It is no longer humans and angels worshipping God at this point. Rather, the *heavenly temple itself*, and in particular its מְבִנֵּי ('structures'), sings in praise to God (cf. Ezek 40.2 and 1QS xi 8: מְבִנֵּי).<sup>86</sup> Whereas Song 7 describes the 'structures' (מְבִנֵּי) of the Holy of Holies as living beings, 1QS xi 8 depicts the living community as such—its מְבִנֵּי. Here again the confusion of ontological boundaries becomes evident, where angels, humans and the celestial Temple are depicted as having become a single worshipping amalgam.

Song 9 further explains:

i 1 glorious spirit . . . 2 wondrous likeness *of* most holy spirit, engraved . . . tongue of blessing; and from the likeness of the 3 *divine beings comes* a sound of blessing for the King of those who exalt; and their wondrous praise *is* for the God of the angelic elim . . . their many-colored . . . And they sing joyfully 4 . . . the vestibules of their entryways, spirits of the most holy inner sanctum . . . eternal . . . 5 *And the likeness of* living divine beings is engraved in the vestibules where the King enters, figures of luminous spirits, . . . King, figures of glorious *light, wondrous* spirits; 6 *in* the midst of the spirits of splendor *is a work of* wondrous colors, figures of the living divine beings . . . in the glorious debirim, the structure of the 7 most holy *sanctuary* in the debirim of the King, figures of the divine beings; *and from* the likeness of . . . of holiest holiness 8 . . . debir of the King (4Q405 14–15 i 1–8).

And Song 10 likewise depicts the elements of the inner-most temple sancta praising God:

ii–16 1 fringed edge . . . 2 and rivers of light . . . 3 the appearance of flames of fire . . . *of beauty upon* the veil of the debir of the King . . . 4 in the debir of *His* presence, the mingled colors *of* . . . everything which is engraved upon *the* . . ., figures of heavenly beings. . . 5 *of glory from* both of their sides . . . the veils of the

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<sup>86</sup> 4Q403 1 i 41, 44; cf. 4Q405 14–15 i 6; 11QShirShabb 2–1–9 7. Newsom, *Critical Edition*, 40; Schäfer, *Origins*, 128.

wondrous debirim. And they bless . . . 6 their sides; they declare . . . of wonder, behind the . . . *of* the debir . . . 7 of wonder . . . *give thanks* to the King of glory with a ringing cry . . . (4Q405 15 ii-16 1-7).

This song mentions neither humans nor angels, except in the engravings in line 4. The joint group have been engraved upon and given life to the devirim, vestibules and veil of the Devir. The images on the décor are therefore not mere drawings or paintings. They are in reality the 'likeness of living gods', that is, the humans and angels who had previously united together. Ra'anana Boustán is right to comment that 'the cultic art and architecture [are imbued] with the living force of the angelic beings depicted on them'.<sup>87</sup>

What the previous songs depict through their use of imagery, Song 11 states unambiguously:

6 Living divine beings are all their *construction* (אלוהים חיים צוריי רוחות) 7 and the images of their figures *are* holy angels (וצורות בדניהם מלאכי קודש), 4Q405 19ABCD 6-7).

The chiasmic structure of these two statements, which span the latter part of line 6 and beginning of line 7, suggests that each line serves to confirm and elaborate upon the other.<sup>88</sup> They make the claim that the component parts of the temple *are* none other than the joint human-angelic council of Songs 6-8 (and 1QS xi 3-10; cf. Ps 24.7, 9).<sup>89</sup> The community's rituals lead them, as Ps 24.7, 9 read, to 'make themselves ready' for the Lord's glorious arrival among them. For they have *become one* with the very *place* God resides: the celestial temple itself.

Moreover, Shirot uses the image of 'engraving' (פִּתּוּחַ etc.) to describe the type of union that occurs when the human-angelic council unite with the celestial temple. The family of terms describes the way the architects applied the decor to the Temple during its construction (Exod

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<sup>87</sup> Boustán, 'Architecture', 205.

<sup>88</sup> Newsom, *Critical Edition*, 300.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 283; Davila, *Works*, 121, 138; Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, 35.

28.9; 1 Kgs 6.29). During praise the community thus unite with the celestial dwelling of God in the same way the engravings became part of the Temple elements. This will surely have implications on how we understand Qumran ontoanthropology.

#### 4.3.3.3 SUMMARY

Shirot fills in the monochromatic portrayal of the community as a temple found in 1QS viii–xi in imaginative and colourful fashion. Much like a stage production, it gives the community a way to act out an otherwise ethereal doctrine. It is an enactment of the community’s replacement of the sacrificial service—which had long served to bring humanity and God into close proximity to one another—with their own liturgical sacrifices.<sup>90</sup> As Michael Swartz writes, ‘By preserving the memory of the Temple, the magicians [i.e. those who re-enact Temple rituals] recall sacred place. But at the same time they transfer its sanctity to anyone who holds the magic, thus allowing all who practice it to become powerful persons’.<sup>91</sup> Personal power is only part of the desired result of such practices at Qumran. Such performances led to the community’s multidimensional encounter with God and then to their eventual egression into the spiritual dwelling of God.

### 4.4 A SUMMARY OF QUMRAN-SECTARIAN JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

We are now in a position to make some tenable suggestions based on the aggregate portrait of 1QS viii–xi, 4Q174 and the Sabbath Shirot. Qumran-

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<sup>90</sup> Michael D. Swartz, ‘Sacrificial Themes in Jewish Magic’, in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (RGRW 141; eds. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 303–15; Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward A New Biblical Theology* (RP 26; New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 161–226; Baruch A. Levine, ‘The Presence of God in Biblical Religion’, in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E.R. Goodenough* (SHR 14; ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 71–87.

<sup>91</sup> Swartz, ‘Themes’, 315. See this same re-signification of Temple ideas and practices in our seventh chapter below.

Sectarian Jews believed there to be a distinction between the inner and outer parts of the human. The body is trapped in its sinful, corrupt state, while the inner part has the potential for rather incredible ontological change (NS). That the Jerusalem Temple is no longer the place where humans can meet God motivates sectarian thinking on mystical change (P<sup>1</sup>). Communal liturgical and ascetical engagements lead the entire community towards the DHE (P<sup>2</sup>). Thus while the encounter with God is one-directional at the outset (DHE: HA), when God comes to dwell among the community, the DHE becomes one in which both human and divine advance towards one another (DHE: MA). And the encounter that occurs is not just between one human and God. It is a multilateral encounter shared by the sectarian community, the angelic hosts around God in heaven, God himself, and the celestial structure in which he dwells. All of these *components*, if they may be called that, blend together in a way that each is separable from one another (*Mix K*). The human is centripetal outwardly (*CentriP*), but inwardly the bounds between one member of the community and another are highly centrifugal (*CentriF*). They are so much so that they can unite with one another, the angels and God, and then with the celestial temple in which God resides. The change that results from this encounter is one in which the community return to their edenic state of glory, temporarily retrieving the ontological condition lost at the Fall (MT: TRH).

#### 4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

1QS viii 4–10 describes the communal temple in a straightforward manner. 1QS ix 3–6 then explains how this temple comes into being, namely, through the performance of liturgies. The Sabbath Shirot then vividly illustrates how this human temple comes into being. The culmination of this communal transformative experience is then the

appearance of God's glory among the community, his anthropomorphous house.

As noted in the prefatory remarks to this chapter, the Qumran community were communal-minded through and through. This has led them to conceive of a mystical-transformative experience that involves, to state it rather simply, *more than one person at the same time*. We will see in chapter eight the significance of this collective experience. At this point, however, we look to yet another example of Genus 3 in Paul the Apostle.

## CHAPTER 5

### ΠΕΡΙΤΟΜΗ AND THE HEAVENLY ΠΟΛΙΤΕΥΜΑ A NEW WAY OF *BEING* IN PHILIPPIANS 3

#### 5.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

We turn now from the Sectarian Judaism of the Qumran community to the Christian Judaism of Paul the Apostle, who represents Species 3B of Genus 3 (Communal Transformation). What is true of those at Qumran is also true of Paul, namely, an emphasis on the transformation of the collective. While the individual always plays a role in any communal experience, his or her value lies predominantly in being a part of a community.

The specific Pauline text under investigation is Philippians 3.1–21. Paul here seeks to encourage the believing community at Philippi, who are struggling with questions about their identity.<sup>1</sup> He seems to think that what will alleviate many of their struggles is a radical realignment of their self-conception. They are a community whose identity, and whose very existence, is tied to their membership in the *new* people of God. As members of this new community, something extraordinary has changed inside them such that the suffering they experience *outwardly* affects them *inwardly* in ways that are truly out of this world.<sup>2</sup> What this identity and its correlating ontoanthropology look like is the subject of the present chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 77–102. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2–14; Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 191; Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 82.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark D. Given, 'On his Majesty's Secret Service: The Undercover Ethos of Paul', in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ESEC 11; eds. T.H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 196–213 [210].

### 5.1.1 PHILIPPIANS 3.1–21—TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Before beginning our investigation of Phil 3.1–21, we should quote the text in full. Our focus is chiefly on vv. 1–11 and 18–21, so we shall leave aside vv. 12–17 for now. Our text reads as follows:

3.1 Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές. 2 Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν. 3 ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, 4 καί περ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποίθησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον· 5 περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος ... 6 ... κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος.

7 Ἀλλ' ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἤγημαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν. 8 ἀλλὰ μενούγγε καὶ ἡγούμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγούμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω 9 καὶ εὕρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, 10 τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, 11 εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

...

18 πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὓς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίω λέγων, τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 19 ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονούντες. 20 ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, 21 ὃς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτόν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα.

3.1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— 4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day ... 6 ... as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his

sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection of the dead.

...

18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our πολίτευμα *exists* in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.<sup>3</sup>

This text is remarkable on a number of counts. Let us make some brief introductory observations that will set us up for detailed investigation below.

#### 5.1.1.1 PAUL'S RHETORICAL METHODS

Especially important in Phil 3 are the well-conceived rhetorical methods Paul employs throughout the chapter. He utilises various parallels, chiasms and other devices to make his argument. Scholars have been prone to find these devices, but they are still worth reviewing briefly at this point.

##### 5.1.1.1.1 TO REPEAT THE SAME THING MULTIPLE TIMES (PHIL 3.1)

To ensure that his message gets through to the Philippians, Paul literally tells them, 'The same to write to you' (τὸ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν).<sup>4</sup> Here he makes a deliberate claim about his overarching method of argumentation. He assures them that it is no 'trouble' (ὀκνηρόν) for him to repeat himself, and that it is a 'safeguard' (ἄσφαλές) for them that he do so (3.1).<sup>5</sup> But what is it that he plans to repeat? Does he plan to tell them again something he has said earlier in this letter? Or is there another reason for his telling them this?

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<sup>3</sup> English translations of biblical texts are taken from the NRSV, unless otherwise noted. Modifications are in italics.

<sup>4</sup> Markus N.A. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC 11; London: A & C Black, 1998), 179.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 178–9.



The former option is unlikely for two reasons.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, he is explicit that v. 1 marks the beginning of ‘the rest’ (τὸ λοιπόν) of his message. What follows is *in addition to* what he has told them in chs. 1–2. This is not to say that he will not point back to or build on certain things he has said before, but only that it is not *those things* which he specifically plans to repeat in ch. 3. On the other hand, the lack of the adverb ‘again’ (πάλιν) suggests that he is not saying something again, but that what he will say he will repeat more than once.

Paul’s use of the present infinitive γράφειν indicates that his message is ‘action in progress’.<sup>7</sup> It demands elaboration and illustration in order truly to be grasped.<sup>8</sup> It is so critical to his readers’ survival as a believing community and so difficult to comprehend that it bears repeating multiple times.

#### 5.1.1.1.2 ALLITERATION, PARALLELISM, CHIASM, POETRY AND STORY

As noted above Paul employs various devices in Phil 3 in making his case. Firstly, he uses alliteration, parallelism and chiasm on several occasions in the chapter. In v. 2 he uses alliteration in warning the Philippians of their opponents. He tells them to beware of τοὺς κύνας . . . τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας . . . τὴν κατατομήν.<sup>9</sup> This is a clever way to reinforce the fact that all three of the epithets refer to the same opponents.

Having warned his readers of those for whom they must watch out, Paul turns in v. 3 to tell his beloved congregation who *they* are. The shape of this verse is especially crucial to its meaning. The verse takes the form of a twofold chiasm:

For we are the Circumcision, who:

(A) By (means of) the Spirit of God

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<sup>6</sup> Contra Ibid., 179–80.

<sup>7</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 350–1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 347.

(B) Are worshipping  
 And  
 (B<sup>1</sup>) Are boasting  
 (A<sup>1</sup>) In Christ Jesus  
 But *not*  
 (A<sup>2</sup>) In the flesh  
 (B<sup>2</sup>) Are trusting

The first part of this complex chiasm is found in the participial phrases constituting A, B and B<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>1</sup>. This is Paul's positive declaration about who the Philippian believers are and what their identity means to them. They are a community who worship by means of the Spirit of God, and who boast in Christ Jesus. The second part then comes in the participial clause identified as A<sup>2</sup> and B<sup>2</sup>. Here Paul tells the Philippians who they are *not* and what they do *not* do.<sup>10</sup> They absolutely do not trust in the flesh as, presumably, their opponents do. Bear in mind that all of what Paul says in this twofold chiasm reiterates his claim about the Philippians being the Circumcision. What all of this means will be fleshed out below.

He uses more of the same devices in the following verses. In v. 7 Paul he will use parallelism to reinforce his point.<sup>11</sup> In vv. 8b–9a Paul makes use of a small-scale chiasm in beginning his expansion of what it means to have knowledge of Christ Jesus. In v. 9b he digresses briefly from his main point, using a chiasm again in commenting about the place of the Law in the light of his new life in Christ.

Secondly, Paul begins v. 2 with a grammatical construct that he uses only two other times in his authentic letters. This takes the form of ἡμεῖς + γάρ. In each of the three times he uses this construct, he is dealing with matters concerning the identity of the people of God.

The ἡμεῖς + γάρ construct appears, for example, in 2 Cor 6.16. Here Paul is trying to explain why believers must remain separate from

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 362–3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 383.

unbelievers. He tells them simply, ‘For we (ἡμεῖς γάρ) are the temple of the living God’ (my trans.). Having the Spirit in their midst, the Corinthians must live as if continually in the divine presence in the Temple.

In Gal 5.5 he similarly attempts to warn the Galatians not to give in to those trying to convince them to be circumcised. Outward, fleshly things like circumcision are of no use to them, but these will only lead to alienation from Christ. Why? ‘For [or ‘because’] we (ἡμεῖς γάρ) by means of the Spirit (πνεύματι), from faith, longingly await the hope of righteousness’ (my trans.).

This construct will reappear in a slightly different form in v. 20 where it carries the same meaning as in v. 3, 2 Cor 6.16 and Gal 5.5. In Phil 3.20 the construct reads ἡμῶν + γάρ. Rather than using the nominative plural ἡμεῖς, Paul uses the possessive ἡμῶν—a difference which does not affect the parallel Paul is establishing between vv. 2–3 and 18–21. No doubt there is a deliberate link between Paul’s claims in each text, the nature of which we discuss shortly below. For each unit follows the same pattern: it identifies those opponents against whom Paul is writing (vv. 2 + 18–19), and makes a positive declaration about the Philippians themselves (vv. 3 + 20).

In 2 Cor 6.16, Gal 5.5 and Phil 3.2–3 and 18–21, Paul finds the ἡμεῖς + γάρ construct especially helpful to make his point. In each case, he sets up an antithesis between those who are God’s people by means of their possession of the Spirit and those who (wrongly) think they are because of outward circumcision (περιτέμνω and περιτομή, Gal 5.3, 6). Outward circumcision is ‘powerless’ (ἰσχύω) to do what having the Spirit and being in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) can do (vv. 5, 6). Being God’s people is not about circumcision or other outward requirements (Gal 5; Phil 3). It is about having possession of the presence of God.

Of particular importance is the explanatory conjunction γάρ in the ἡμεῖς + γάρ construct linking Phil 3.2 to v. 3. Here it is the hinge upon

which the antithesis rests. It refers back to what Paul has just said about the opponents, and then points forward to what he is about to say. What he is about to say is further explanation about what he has already said. We follow the NRSV in translating γάρ 'for', but one could justifiably render it something like 'Why? Because'.<sup>12</sup> For he is giving reason why he has made such a bold claim about his opponents. As noted already, γάρ reappears in v. 20 where it has the same meaning and carries the same force.

Thirdly, perhaps the most difficult of the various devices Paul uses in Phil 3 comes in the form of a complex of methods in vv. 8–11. Using v. 7 as a springboard, Paul launches into a single sentence that spans the following four-verse unit of text. This unit alone contains several rhetorical devices. After the digression of v. 9b, in v. 10 Paul returns once again to his main argument, at this point to drive it home in dramatic fashion. He picks up on the theme which underlies the entire unit of text spanning vv. 8–11. This is the theme of knowledge of Christ. All that he once had is 'refuse' in comparison to having 'knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord' (γνώσις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, v. 8).

Fourthly, two principal narratives undergird Paul's message in Phil 3. On the one hand, most commentators agree that Paul has probably drawn from LXX Jer 9.23–6 in formulating his message here. Essentially, through the prophet the Lord criticises Israel for boasting in outward, fleshly things such as circumcision rather than in their knowledge of him. The overlap between Jer 9.23–6 and Phil 3.1–21 includes a focus on 'circumcision' (περιτομή), 'boasting' (καυχάομαι), 'knowledge' (γνώσις) and 'righteousness' (δικαιοσύνη). Paul redeploys these terms to frame the community's self-understanding as God's people (cf. §5.1.1.2).

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 358; Vincent, *Philippians*, 93.

On the other hand, Paul uses the Christ story of 2.6–11 as the paradigm for the Christian story he tells in 3.1–21.<sup>13</sup> Morna Hooker seems correct when she states that in Phil 3 ‘we seem to see him [Paul] taking the theme and language of the hymn [of 2.6–11] and working out its application’.<sup>14</sup> We know that 2.6–11 traces the transformation of Christ who, having had a share in divine existence, entered humanity by adopting their ‘form’ (μορφή). Now in 3.1–21 Paul will apply the Christ story to that of the Philippian Christians. Neal Flanagan points out that the movement of both 2.6–11 and 3.1–21 ‘is downward, and then upward’.<sup>15</sup> Thus like Christ who, having had possession of divine existence already, took on that of humanity (2.6–8), Paul hopes the Philippians’ own self emptying will achieve for them the same type of experience.

#### 5.1.1.2 PAUL’S THESIS STATEMENT (PHIL 3.2–3)

Paul’s thesis comes in vv. 2–3 in the form of an antithesis between *them* and *us*. As noted already, he begins in v. 2 by warning his readers against *them*: the ‘dogs’ and ‘evil workers’, whose identity is none other than the Mutilation (κατατομή).<sup>16</sup> In v. 3 he declares that, on the contrary, it is ‘we [who] are the Circumcision’ (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή).<sup>17</sup> Using paranomasia, Paul makes plain that *his message will centre on an antithesis between them and us, the Mutilation and the Circumcision*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Neal Flanagan, ‘A Note on Philippians 3,20–21’, *CBQ* 18 (1956): 8–9; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 130–1; T.E. Pollard, ‘The Integrity of Philippians’, *NTS* 13 (1966): 57–66; Morna D. Hooker, ‘Interchange in Christ’, in *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 13–25 [20–1]; Lincoln, *Paradise*, 107; Silva, *Philippians*, 14; Blackwell, *Christosis*, 207.

<sup>14</sup> Hooker, ‘Interchange in Christ’, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Flanagan, ‘Note’, 9.

<sup>16</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 357–8; cf. John M.G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews: Studies in the Social Formation of Christian Identity* (WUNT 2.275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 61–79.

<sup>17</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 350–7; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 192.

<sup>18</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 357; Joachim Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief, Auslegung* (HTKNT 10.3; Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1968), 186.

#### 5.1.1.2.1 THE MUTILATION (κατατομή) AS STUBBORN ISRAEL

In outlining his thesis, Paul begins with a description of the opposition: the Mutilation (κατατομή). κατατομή occurs only once in the NT: here in Phil 3.2. In cultic settings, κατατομή and κατατέμνω signify the ‘mutilation’ of one’s body.<sup>19</sup> The verb carries this sense in the LXX, where we learn that the prophets of Baal ‘were cutting themselves’ (κατετέμνοντο) with daggers and lances’ (1 Kgs [3 Βασιλ] 18.28, trans. P.D. McLean and B.A. Taylor). In Hos 7.14 the Lord criticises Israel for rebelling against him, declaring that only ‘they were gashing themselves (κατετέμνοντο) for grain and wine’ (trans. G.E. Howard). When Paul calls his opponents the Mutilation, he is evoking these biblical criticisms of Israel. Though they think that their physical circumcision assures their membership in God’s people, it is but skin deep, and they are mutilating their bodies in vain.<sup>20</sup>

#### 5.1.1.2.2 THE CIRCUMCISION (περιτομή) AS TRUE ISRAEL

Paul turns from a brief depiction of the opponents to a description of us: the Circumcision. In the LXX, περιτομή (cf. περιτέμνω) signifies the act of physical circumcision (Gen 17.13; Exod 4.25; Lev 12.3; 1 Macc 2.46), of which Paul speaks pejoratively in most cases (Rom 2.25–3.1; Gal 5.2, 3; 6.12, 13; Phil 3.2).<sup>21</sup> The only acceptable circumcision is not ‘in the flesh’

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<sup>19</sup> Rudolf Meyer, ‘περιτέμνω, περιτομή, ἀπερίτμητος’ in *TDNT* 6.72–84; Cf. Helmut Köster, ‘τέμνω κτλ’, in *TDNT* 8.106–13.

<sup>20</sup> The issue of Paul’s opponents is not one to ignore, and the reader should consult the many fine commentaries for pertinent discussion. However, our position on such matters is twofold. One, Paul’s chief concern is not with the identity of the opponents but with that of the Philippians. They know who their opponents are but not their significance. Paul only discusses the opponents enough to make a contrast between them and his readers. He only wants, in other words, to show that they fit the depiction of stubborn Israel in Jer 9.23–6. Two, it is hard to think, given the incredibly close thematic and other links between vv. 2–3 and 18–21 that all of the sudden Paul has a different set of opponents in mind in the latter from that of the former, as some have suggested. Whomever they might be precisely, the opponents Paul has in mind serve one purpose rhetorically: they fulfil the role of the opposition, the contrast, the Mutilation, to those whose well-being is of true concern, the Philippian believers.

<sup>21</sup> But see Rom 15.8; Gal 2.7, where the sense is neutral.

(ἐν σαρκί) but ‘of the heart by means of the Spirit’ (καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι, Rom 2.28, 29). The true people of God are not God’s people based on outward, bodily ‘mutilation’ (κατατομή) *or* ‘circumcision’ (περιτομή) but on something else altogether, on which Paul will elaborate in Phil 3.3–21.

Still one must ask, why Circumcision? Obviously the paranomasia—the play on like words—Paul uses to pit the κατατομή and περιτομή against one another carries rhetorical force.<sup>22</sup> Yet there is probably more to it than this. In discussing Paul’s ‘body of Christ’ nomenclature, Ernst Käsemann suggests that Paul chooses certain expressions over others because the more obvious ones are insufficient.<sup>23</sup> Merely to borrow language used of Israel and reapply it wholemeal to the new believing community would only partly express how remarkable Paul conceives this new community to be.<sup>24</sup> Thus for Paul to call the Philippians ‘God’s People’, or even ‘Israel’, would not capture the fullness of their identity and, more importantly, the new state of existence they possess. This same reasoning probably lies behind Paul’s use of Circumcision and Mutilation in Phil 3.1–21.

### 5.1.2 SPIRIT, SUFFERING AND TRANSFORMATION IN PAUL

We are attempting to understand Paul’s thoughts on the present transformative experience of the believing community. It should thus be useful to see what he says about such matters outside of Phil 3.1–21. Let us look first at Phil 1–2 and then at a notable example in 2 Corinthians.

#### 5.1.2.1 THE SPIRIT AND THE PRESENT WORK OF GOD (PHIL 1–2)

Even before Phil 3, Paul exhibits a concern for the community’s transformation, or more accurately, their perfection. He explains early in

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<sup>22</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 357; Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief*, 186.

<sup>23</sup> Käsemann, ‘Body of Christ’, 108–9.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

the letter that a dynamic activity is taking place inside them even now.<sup>25</sup> ‘Having begun’ (ἐναρξάμενος) a good work (ἔργον) in them, Paul writes in 1.6, God ‘will perfect’ (ἐπιτελέσει) them until (ἄχρι) the day of Christ Jesus (Rom 15.28; 2 Cor 7.1; 8.6, 11).<sup>26</sup> That Paul says God will perfect the Philippians ‘until’ (ἄχρι) the day of Christ Jesus indicates that the perfecting is already happening right now. In 2.12–13 he then adds that they are to continue to ‘work out’ (κατεργάζεσθε) their ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία) as God continues ‘working’ (ἐνεργῶν) in them. These remarks are similar to a question he asks the Galatian believers: ‘Having started with the Spirit (ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι), are you now ending with the flesh?’ (νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελείσθε, Gal 3.3).<sup>27</sup> According to these texts, believers are in the process of obtaining ‘perfection’ or ‘completion’ (τὸ τέλος) already in the present life (see §2.4 and §5.3.1). This all-too-brief survey of Paul at least gives us a way into his thinking on transformation, though in another text he deals with the subject rather explicitly.

#### 5.1.2.2 SPIRIT, SUFFERING AND THE NEW CREATION (2 COR 3–5)

In writing to the believers at Corinth, Paul sets out to defend his ministry and all that is associated with it against an apparently dangerous group of critics. The group’s chief criticism is that they see Paul’s failing body as

<sup>25</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: WJK, 2009), 30.

<sup>26</sup> So Fee, *Philippians*, 87 n. 69; contra Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 21. On new creation here, see J. Gerald Janzen, ‘Creation and New Creation in Philippians 1:6’, *HBT* 18 (1996): 27–54; Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief*, 46–7; Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 66; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 21; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 64; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 62; Jean-François Collange, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians* (London: Epworth, 1979), 45–6; John Paul Heil, *Philippians: Let Us Rejoice in Being Conformed to Christ* (ECL 3; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 42–3; contra Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (WEC; Chicago: Moody, 1988), 51–2 [hereafter *Philippians*]; Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (NAC 32; Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 58 n. 15; Fee, *Philippians*, 87 n. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Moisés Silva, *Philippians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2d ed., 2005), 46 [hereafter *Exegetical Commentary*].



evidence for the failure of his ministry.<sup>28</sup> Against this Paul contends that *what they see on the outside is starkly different from what is taking place on the inside*.<sup>29</sup>

His defence spans chs. 2–7 and rests on a multidimensional antithesis: i.e. *them* vs. *us*; the old vs. the new; the Spirit vs. the Law; the past vs. the present; the outer vs. the inner.<sup>30</sup> The climactic moment of this section of 2 Corinthians comes in chs. 3–5, specifically 5.17, where Paul declares:

ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν  
καινὰ

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

If this is the culmination of Paul's argument, what then is the argument this statement brings to a close? What is it that Paul feels the need to punctuate with such a bold declaration? Understanding the meaning of this verse is possible when one understands that it is tied directly to, among others, two specific remarks from 2 Cor 3–4.

#### 5.1.2.2.1 THE ΚΑΙΝὴ ΚΤΙΣΙΣ AS THE *BEING-CREATED-ANEW* CREATURE

Paul's declaration about the so-called *new creation* in 2 Cor 5.17 is generally understood as a summary of all that he has said in the preceding chapters (i.e. chs. 3–5).<sup>31</sup> Moyer Hubbard rightly asserts, '2 Corinthians

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<sup>28</sup> Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (NCBC; Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 145. On Paul's opponents, see Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTSup 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990).

<sup>29</sup> Fredrik Lindgård, *Paul's Line of Thought in 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10* (WUNT 2.189; Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 106–219.

<sup>30</sup> Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (SNTSMS 119; Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 136–7; Gerhard Dautzenberg, 'Motive der Selbstdarstellung des Paulus in 2 Kor 2.14–7.4' in *L'apôtre Paul. Personnalité, style et conception du ministère* (BEL 73; ed. Albert Vanhoye; Leuven: Leuven University, 1986), 150–62 [160–2].

<sup>31</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 137–9; David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (NAC 29; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 287; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*

5.17 epitomizes this line of thought (transformation by the Spirit, 3.18; conversion = creation *ex nihilo*, 4.6; the making anew of the inner person, 4.16, etc.) in a climactic *Jubelruf* of thanksgiving'.<sup>32</sup> Hubbard's statement is illuminating on two counts.

First, the new creation is not in this case cosmological but anthropological.<sup>33</sup> This is evident, firstly, in Paul's use of τις in 17a, to which the καινὴ κτίσις is directly related. That Paul says 'anyone' (τις) rather than, for example, 'anything' (e.g. πᾶς) in Christ is a καινὴ κτίσις indicates that the καινὴ κτίσις itself is the *being-created-anew* of the human creature, not of the cosmos. Secondly, that the experience of new creation is dependent on one's being in Christ further indicates the anthropological nature of the καινὴ κτίσις. It would be odd to think that the new creation of the cosmos would be dependent on a single human creature's participation in Christ.<sup>34</sup>

Second, part *b* of v. 17 is highly important for our understanding not only of v. 17 itself but of the whole of Paul's ontoanthropology. He asserts that for those who are now in Christ, the old (ἀρχαῖος) passed away *entirely* (παρῆλθεν: aor. of παρέρχομαι), and the 'new' (καινός) has come into being (γέγονεν: perf. of γίνομαι) in place of the old. Presumably the referent of the adjectives ἀρχαῖος and καινός is whomever τις signifies in v. 17a—newness supersedes the oldness of the *anyone* who is in Christ.

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on the *Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; New York: Charles & Scribner's Sons, 1915), 149; Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 383.

<sup>32</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 180.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 179; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 427; Hans-Jürgen Findeis, *Versöhnung-Apostolat-Kirche: Eine exegetisch-theologische und rezeptions-geschichtliche Studie zu den Versöhnungsaussagen des Neuen Testaments (2 Kor, Röm, Kol, Eph)* (FzB 40; Würzburg: Echter, 1983), 150–1; Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (ZWK 32; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1967), 68. Contra Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 333; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 286–7; George R. Beasley-Murray, '2 Corinthians', in *2 Corinthians-Philemon* (BBC 11; ed. C.J. Allen; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1972), 1–76 [42].

<sup>34</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco: Word Publishing, 1986), 152; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (NTT; Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 59–60.

The meaning of v. 17 becomes relatively clear on a general level: when a person comes to be in Christ, he or she really and literally sheds the old state of being marked by death (so 3.1, etc.) and becomes something entirely new. One might translate *καὶνὴ κτίσις* as ‘new creation’, ‘new creature’ or perhaps ‘new type of creature’.<sup>35</sup> We must ask, however, *in what sense* the believer is a *new creature*? The answer to this question is to be found in what precedes 5.17, specifically in 3.17–18 and 4.16–18.

#### 5.1.2.2.2 THE NEW SPIRIT-COVENANT

First, the new creature is one who partakes of a covenant-experience that is altogether new and unavailable for those before the Christ-event and for those who are presently *not* in Christ. This covenant-experience is based on the long-awaited outpouring of the Spirit (2 Cor 3.3, 6; Gal 3.14; cf. Eph 1.13).<sup>36</sup> The possession of the Spirit separates Moses’ covenant from the new one (2 Cor 3.6, 17). Paul makes it clear that the Spirit will be of prime concern in what follows already in 1.21–2, where he states that believers have already received the ‘down payment (*ἀρραβών*) of the Spirit’ (1.22; 5.5). Because of the Spirit the veil which once kept humans from beholding God directly is gone (3.16–17);<sup>37</sup> believers are able to ‘see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’ (4.4); and the creator God ‘has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ (v. 6). Thus because of the Spirit believers can see God in a way never before available, not even to Moses.

In the middle of this argument, Paul offers a quasi-climactic summary statement of what he has argued so far. He drives home the

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<sup>35</sup> The latter is meant to be interpretive on our part, not literal, for Paul mentions nothing of a *τύπος* here.

<sup>36</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 150–3; John M.G. Barclay, ‘2 Corinthians’, in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, 1353–73 [1360].

<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Dr Mark Given (private communication) for his observations on this point.

point that what he possesses is far greater than that available in the Mosaic covenant-ministry. His reason for this is as follows:

17 ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὐ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία. 18 ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένοι προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 3.17–18).

Because of the Spirit believers are now able to see Christ directly. This leads inevitably to an experience of progressive glorification in which they are continually becoming more and more like Christ.<sup>38</sup> As John Barclay explains, '[L]ike Moses, one cannot see such glory and come away unchanged: to experience God's glory in Jesus Christ is to undergo transformation "into the same image" (cf. Rom 8:29). Believers thus become like what they see: the vision molds its viewers'.<sup>39</sup> Believers have entered God's presence, where they partake in the vision of his glory in a way that is vaguely similar to Moses' experience at Sinai and in the Tabernacle. Yet since it is by means of the Spirit that believers enter God's presence, there is a critical difference between their and Moses' experience. Unlike Moses, who had to exit God's presence and whose transformation therefore faded, believers never have to leave. The consequent transformation they receive from the divine presence thus never fades. It only becomes more and more glorious all the time. Erhardt Gütgemanns rightly observes that with the Spirit inside the believer has become the 'Objekt und Ort der Epiphanie des Kyrios'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> Barclay, '2 Corinthians', 1360.

<sup>40</sup> Gütgemanns, *Der leidende Apostel*, 116.

#### 5.1.2.2.3 OUTWARD FAILINGS, INWARD TRANSFORMATION

Second, the new creature is one whose ontological state of being has changed. His or her old state of being has passed away and been replaced by a new one.<sup>41</sup> This new state of being is such that what one now possesses *inwardly* is markedly different—precisely the opposite, in fact—from that which others see on the outside. Paul is no doubt aware that although a new creature, nothing has changed as far as concerns his outward body. He is still subject to the ills of fallen creation. He describes his body as a jar of clay in which lies a glorious treasure (4.7). He lists only a few of the various trials he has faced in his gospel ministry (vv. 8–9). All of the suffering that buffets his ‘mortal flesh’ (v. 11) he describes in terms of ‘always carrying in the body the death of Jesus’ (v. 10), ‘always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake’ (v. 11), and having ‘death’ at work in him (v. 12).

In what we understand to be a second quasi-climactic statement, Paul declares that there is a positive side to bodily suffering, but only for those with the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> As he has said already in 3.17–18, believers now stand in the presence of God and behold his/Christ’s face directly in a way that is not available to outsiders. But while having the Spirit inside effects a certain amount of glorious transformation inside believers, what takes place when they suffer outwardly adds further fuel on which this inward transformation might feed.<sup>43</sup> Thus Paul states in 2 Cor 4.16–18:<sup>44</sup>

16 Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινίζεται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα. 17 τὸ γὰρ παραυτίκα ἐλαφρόν

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<sup>41</sup> Contra Murphy-O’Connor (*Corinthians*, 60), who regards the change as a mere change in perspective.

<sup>42</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 146.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 248; cf. Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Complete’, 186–8; A.E. Harvey, *Renewal Through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 49–51.

<sup>44</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 101–40; Harvey, *Renewal*, 58–62; Jerry W. McCant, 2 *Corinthians* (RANBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 48–9; Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Christusbystik des Apostels Paulus* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2d ed., 1956), 17–18; Vincent, *Philippians*, 35, 105.

τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης  
κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν, 18 μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ  
βλεπόμενα· τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal (2 Cor 4.16–18).

When those with the Spirit suffer, even though their bodily apparatus decays as does that of other humans, their inner being experiences something different.<sup>45</sup> Outward suffering ‘is working to produce’ an inward ‘weight of glory’ (βάρος δόξης) even as Paul pens his letter.<sup>46</sup> As C.K. Barrett observes, the present tense of the verb κατεργάζομαι indicates that the suffering which is being produced ‘is not simply a futuristic present; the glory is already in part present, in the daily renewal of our *inward man*’.<sup>47</sup> This is the same suffering Paul claims to ‘carry around’ in his body in 4.10. While it causes the ‘outer person’ (ἔξω . . . ἄνθρωπος) to decay (v. 16), it produces within the believer’s ‘inner [person]’ (ἔσω) a transformation such that he or she comes to share in the ‘image’ (εἰκὼν, 3.17–18) and ‘glory’ (δόξα, 4.17) of Christ and God—what Ernst Käsemann calls ‘himmlischer Lichtstoff’.<sup>48</sup>

No longer ensnared by the ‘old’ state of being (so 5.17b), believers are now a type of creature whose outward suffering, though it continues

<sup>45</sup> So Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 101–40; Jervis, *Heart*, 39; C. Merrill Proudfoot, ‘Imitation or Realistic Participation: A Study of Paul’s Concept of “Suffering with Christ”’, *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 140–60; Hooker, ‘Interchange in Christ’, 13–25; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 146–7. Contra Litwa, *Transformed*, 212 n. 38; Andrew Perriman, ‘The Pattern of Christ’s Sufferings: Colossians 1:24 and Philippians 3:10–11’, *TB* 42 (May 1991): 62–79 [68–78].

<sup>46</sup> Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 352; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 251–2; Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 68–9; C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1973), 146–8.

<sup>47</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 147–8.

<sup>48</sup> Käsemann, *Leib*, 144. On ‘glory’ in Jewish mystical tradition, see Andrei A. Orlov and Alexander Golitzin, ‘“Many Lamps Are Lightened From the One”: Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in Macarian Homilies’, *VC* 55 (2001): 281–98 [285–6]; Morray-Jones, ‘Mysticism’, 4–6; Moshe Weinfeld, ‘כבוד’, *TDOT* 7.22–38; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (trans. R.A. Harrisville; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 73

to break down the body as it always has, has now become a catalyst of sorts which causes the inner self to become more glorious all the time. The primary means by which the new type of creature undergoes inner change is ‘the Lord, the Spirit’ (3.18). But the presence of the Spirit not only changes those it inhabits, *it also changes the way outward suffering effects those it inhabits*. Those who have the Spirit and who suffer for the gospel only *speed up*, one might say, the inner glorification that is already taking place inside them. It is not surprising that in places like Gal 6.12–15 Paul tells his readers to embrace the suffering that comes from following Christ, for they are a *new type of creature*.

It is important that in each of the two texts in which Paul overtly describes transformation we find reference to the means by which change occurs. In 3.17–18 we encounter the difficult phrase καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος. Commentators generally agree that καθάπερ ἀπὸ signifies the means by which transformation occurs.<sup>49</sup> Thus it is ‘the Lord, the Spirit’ whom Paul thinks ultimately lies behind the progressive glorification taking place inside believers.<sup>50</sup> In 4.16–18 we then find that it is the outward suffering which is ‘working to produce’ (κατεργάζομαι) the inner renewal and glorification inside the believer.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the Spirit, that which happens to the bodies of believers effects further change inside them. And the end result is not a transformation into some sort of Spirit-being, as Engberg-Pedersen has recently argued.<sup>52</sup> It is instead the transformation into the ‘image’ of God in Christ.<sup>53</sup>

#### 5.1.2.2.4 SPIRIT-FILLED CREATURES AND THE NEW ONTOLOGICAL STATE

The Christ-event has made available a new ontological state of being for anyone who elects to adhere to the policies of the new covenant. When a

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<sup>49</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 138–9; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 286; Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory: Paul’s Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3:1–18* (JSNTSup 52; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 292.

<sup>50</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 125; Segal, *Convert*, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 147–8.

<sup>52</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Material Spirit’, 188.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Jervis, *Heart*, 39; Hubbard, *Creation*, 154–7.

human does this, he or she takes possession of the Spirit of God and comes to exist in Christ. The full potential inherent in this new state of being is probably beyond even Paul's own comprehension. James Denney was right over a century ago that in Christ Paul believes himself to be 'another man in another universe'.<sup>54</sup> He only knows that believers now have a relationship with God to which not even Moses had access. This new proximity to God is determined not by outward things but by what is taking place inwardly via the Spirit. Paul is seemingly resigned to the fact that no matter how hard he tries, he can never truly express what is really taking place in believers. He can only declare that 'anyone who is in Christ is a new creature' (καὶνὴ κτίσις, 5.17).<sup>55</sup> What is taking place *inside* the new creature is the progressive ontological transformation into the same glorious composition of which Christ is made.

#### 5.1.2.3 PAUL'S METAMORPHIC PROGRAMME

It is safe to say that Paul conceives of something of a metamorphic programme in 2 Cor 3–5, even though he does not necessarily state it in such terms. The programme might be illustrated thus:

Spirit + Suffering (+ Sight) = Transformation

For those who possess the Spirit, what happens on the outside is precisely the opposite of what happens on the inside. The outside remains trapped in a state of decay that will not cease until Christ's return (2 Cor 5.1–5; Phil 3.21), while the inside is continually being remade into a new degree of glory.<sup>56</sup> The outside and inside are not only different, but what happens to the former directly affects the latter. The very things which

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<sup>54</sup> James Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (EB; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 5th ed., 1910), 206.

<sup>55</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 138–9.

<sup>56</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 146.



make the human body break down are those which are causing the inner person to become ever more like Christ.

## **5.2 WHAT IT MEANS TO *BE* THE CIRCUMCISION (PHIL 3.1–11)**

It would be safe to say that for Paul, when the Spirit of God is present, virtually anything can happen. Because of the Spirit an otherwise normal, decaying human creature has become an *entirely new type of creature* (2 Cor 5.17; Gal 6.15). This same conception of the Spirit pervades Phil 3 as well, even though the language Paul uses to describe the new state of being differs from that discussed in the preceding sections.

We shall now argue that the assumptions that permeate Paul's so-called metamorphic programme in 2 Cor 3–5 are inherent in Phil 3 as well. God's people are such because they now possess the Spirit of God (v. 3), who is at work in them in a dynamic way (v. 3). They now have direct access to God, in Christ, in whose immediate presence they now serve as the priests once did in the Temple (v. 3). And because they have the Spirit of God, when they suffer they experience an inner change in which they come to share in the very form of Christ himself (vv. 3, 8–10). Let us now expand on these initial propositions.

### **5.2.1 SERVING BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD**

First, Paul begins his reinforcement of the Philippians' identity as the Circumcision by declaring that they are so because they possess the Spirit of God. They not only possess it, but because of it they share in a most remarkable experience of God in Christ. Making a correspondence between 'worshipping by the Spirit of God' and 'boasting in Christ Jesus', Paul intimates that true service and worship no longer occur in the Jerusalem Temple, but somewhere else altogether.

### 5.2.1.1 THE CIRCUMCISION VERSUS THE TEMPLE CULTUS

That Paul here pits the believing community over against the Temple cultus is evident not least in his use of the verb λατρεύω ('serve'). Firstly, the idea of 'serving' is rooted in the priestly 'service' (עֲבֹדָה) done in the Tabernacle and Temple.<sup>57</sup> It first appears in a command given Moses at Sinai in which the Lord tells him to 'serve' (λατρεύετε) him at the mountain (LXX Exod 3.12; cf. 4.23; 13.5). In Deut 6.13 λατρεύω signifies service to God and is here linked to the experience of 'cleaving' (κολλάω) to God, suggesting there is an intrinsically intimate element to the service (cf. Jdgs 2.7). λατρεύω appears in Heb 13.10 also in reference to those 'serving' (lit.: λατρεύοντες) in the Tabernacle. One thing is certain: Paul conceives of the cultic service as a deeply intimate experience of God (1 Cor 6.16; cf. Acts 5.13; Rom 12.9).<sup>58</sup>

Secondly, Paul himself redeploys λατρεύω and λατρεία not as something done in the Temple, but as something that takes place inside the believer. Thus in Rom 1.9 he explains that it is God 'whom I serve *in* my spirit' (ὃν λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου). Slightly later he claims that God rejected *them* (whomever *they* might be) because *they* 'worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, v. 25; cf. 2 Tim 1.3). In Rom 9.4 Paul then lists the privileges possessed by Israel, among which is the cultic 'service' (λατρεία). And perhaps the most well-known appearance of cultic-service nomenclature comes in Rom 12.1, where Paul exhorts believers to 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice (θυσία), holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship' (λατρεία). Bear in mind that the service is not a mundane practice, but it is that specifically tied to the Temple.

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<sup>57</sup> Hermann Strathmann, 'λατρεύω, λατρεία', in *TDNT* 4.58–65.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, 'κολλάω, προσκολλάω', in *TDNT* 3.822–3.

### 5.2.1.2 THE CIRCUMCISION AS THE TEMPLE CULTUS (OUTSIDE OF PHIL 3)

Paul believes a momentous shift to have occurred in the place and practice of the Temple cultus. Because of the Christ event, the encounter with and service of God now take place not in Jerusalem, but *in* Christ and *inside* God's people—perhaps in their hearts, spirits or inner person in general (Rom 1.9; 2 Cor 4.16–18).<sup>59</sup> And the means by which such activity occurs is none other than the Spirit of God.<sup>60</sup>

Paul speaks of this shift throughout his letters. In Rom 5.2 he explains that by means of Christ and the Spirit, believers 'have gained access (προσπαγωγήν ἐσχίκαμεν) to grace'. In deutero-Pauline tradition believers are said to have gained 'access' (προσπαγωγή) to the Father himself (Eph 2.18; cf. 3.12).<sup>61</sup> As Ernst Käsemann explains, προσπαγωγή refers to 'unhindered access to the sanctuary as the place of God's presence'.<sup>62</sup> And in 2 Cor 3.14 he asserts, '*In Christ* [the veil] is taken away' (ἐν Χριστῷ [τὸ κάλυμμα] καταργεῖται). Through Christ and the Spirit, humankind have re-entered God's presence in a way unavailable since before the Fall.<sup>63</sup> This is surely an experience the law is incapable of achieving (Rom 5.20; Phil 3.9).<sup>64</sup>

In 2 Cor 6.16 Paul affirms this new temple doctrine. He asserts here that 'we are the temple of the living God', that is, God's new place of residence. And he likewise apprises in 1 Cor 6.19, 'Do you not know that your body (σῶμα) is a temple (ναός) of the Holy Spirit in you (τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Theology*, 53.

<sup>60</sup> On spirit as means in Phil 3.3, see J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 145; F.F. Bruce, *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Leicester: InterVarsity, 2007), 106; Fee, *Philippians*, 288; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 360.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce, *Romans*, 116.

<sup>62</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 133.

<sup>63</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 139–40; Litwa, *Transformed*, 164.

<sup>64</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 348; cf. Bruce, *Romans*, 119; Heikki Räisänen, 'Paul's Conversion and the Development of his View of the Law', *NTS* 33 (1987): 404–19; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 51–6, 78; Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (ESEC 7; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001), 153–4; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: YUP, 1990), 34–71.

ἀγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν), whom you received from God (ἀπὸ θεοῦ)? By means of the indwelling presence of the Spirit, the believing community are now the temple of God and the site of his presence just as the Jerusalem Temple had been prior to the Christ event. If one were inclined to consider such suggestions absurd, perhaps he or she should recall that this very idea permeates Qumran thought (see chapter four).

#### 5.2.1.3 THE CIRCUMCISION AS THE TEMPLE CULTUS (IN PHIL 3)

A consideration of Paul's *new* temple theology is essential to understanding Phil 3. We see that God's presence now resides in a spiritual *place*—in Christ and in the believer—by means of the Spirit of God. Right worship of God is also no longer outward but inward, as v. 3 makes plain.<sup>65</sup>

Service to God comes not through the offering of animal sacrifices and offerings but instead pneumatically *inside believers*. That Paul uses λατρεύω in conjunction with his 'in Christ Jesus' formula is suggestive of a real (mystical) relationship between Christ and the believing community. Whereas the Mutilation believe they offer right service to God by adhering to circumcision and, presumably, by going to the Jerusalem Temple to worship, the Circumcision serve him rightly because of the pneumatic reality taking place inside them.<sup>66</sup> Being the Circumcision and the new Temple cultus is deeply existential and ontological.<sup>67</sup>

#### 5.2.2 BOASTING IN CHRIST JESUS

Second, in the same statement Paul tells the Philippians that as the Circumcision they now 'boast in Christ Jesus'.<sup>68</sup> The meaning of this

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<sup>65</sup> Moule, *Origins*, 89.

<sup>66</sup> Silva, *Exegetical Commentary*, 149; cf. Livesey, *Circumcision*, 97.

<sup>67</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 44; cf. Fee, *Philippians*, 330–1; Windisch, *Paulus und Christus*, 230.

<sup>68</sup> On boasting see Rudolf Bultmann, 'καυχόμαι κτλ', in *TDNT* 3.645–54.

participial phrase cannot be ascertained if viewed apart from the phrase ‘serving by the Spirit of God’ (v. 3). Recall that v. 3 took the form of a twofold chiasm, where A, B and A<sup>1</sup>, B<sup>1</sup> mirror and reinforce one another, illustrating what the Circumcision are, while A<sup>2</sup>, B<sup>2</sup> tell us what the Circumcision are not (see §5.1.1.1.2).

#### 5.2.2.1 TO BE IN CHRIST IS TO HAVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD

What we can know is this: based on the chiastic structure of v. 3, being ‘in Christ’ is synonymous with having the Spirit of God inside, but antonymous to having confidence ‘in the flesh’. If we are correct that having the Spirit inside is mystical-experiential, involving the direct, continual encounter with God, then it must also be true that being in Christ involves this same experience. A person cannot be in Christ without also having the Spirit inside (Rom 8.9; Gal 4.6; 2.20; Phil 1.19).<sup>69</sup> To ‘worship by the Spirit’ and ‘boast in Christ Jesus’ are therefore different facets of the same experience.

What it means to be in Christ Jesus is a matter of debate. As we suggested above in chapter one (§1.3.3.2.3), we understand this as a designation for the experience of mystical union shared between Christ and the believing community. Here in Phil 3 the mystical-union is especially important, as we soon see. As Alan Segal has stated, ‘Philippians 3 can be considered a summary of the entire process of spiritual incorporation in Christ’.<sup>70</sup> One might note other Pauline remarks to this same effect. As noted already, 2 Cor 5.17 asserts that to be in Christ is a personal experience—it is not metaphorical or symbolic but real (see §5.1.2.2.1). The corporate side of mystical union is then made more clear elsewhere. Paul asks the Corinthians, for example, ‘Do you not

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<sup>69</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Theology*, 407–8; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 288; Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 49; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (ICC 28; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 388; Michael Parsons, “‘In Christ’ in Paul”, *VE* 18 (1988): 25–44 [35].

<sup>70</sup> Segal, *Convert*, 140.

know that your bodies are members of Christ?' (1 Cor 6.15). He then follows up by answering the question for them: 'But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him' (v. 17). Immediately after this Paul explains that 'your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you' (v. 18). Because they (as a community of individuals) are the (singular, corporate) temple-place where the Spirit dwells, they must live as if continually in the presence of the holy God. For in reality they *are* in his presence! Later Paul tells the Corinthians, 'Now you are the body of Christ and individual members of it' (1 Cor 12.27; cf. Rom 7.4).

When we realise the locative emphasis of Phil 3, especially where Paul tells the Philippians that their community exists 'in heaven' in v. 20, it is hard not to think of the in Christ language as locative as well. To be in Christ is thus more than to live in solidarity with other believers. To be in Christ is to unite to or be incorporated into the pneumatic body of the risen Christ. John Robinson puts it well when he explains that the believing community 'are in literal fact the risen organism of Christ's person in all its concrete reality'.<sup>71</sup> To boast in Christ is, literally, to boast while being incorporated in Christ's pneumatic body.

The experience of God inside those who possess the Spirit of God and who are in Christ is as *real* as that between one human and another. The difference is that those who neither possess the Spirit nor are in Christ cannot enter God's presence the way the believing community do. All of this, bear in mind, is happening right now in the present life. The outward-inward dichotomy is as real here in Phil 3 as it is in better known texts like Rom 7.14–25 and 2 Cor 4.16–18.

#### 5.2.2.2 THE PNEUMATIC CIRCUMCISION VERSUS REBELLIOUS ISRAEL

Furthermore, unlike rebellious Israel in Jer 9.23–6, to whom Paul equates his opponents, the Philippians' 'boasting' is done not in outward things

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<sup>71</sup> John A.T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 5; London: SCM, repr., 1963 [1952]), 51.

but literally *in* Christ Jesus (see §5.1.1.1.2). Rebellious Israel boast because they possess the ‘circumcision’ of the flesh. They believe this to distinguish them from their pagan neighbours, when in reality it serves only to condemn them. The Circumcision, however, partake in an inward experience of God that outsiders—and those of *outward* focus—do not have. Outward, fleshly practices do not achieve what having the Spirit inside and being in Christ achieve. The former do not usher a person into God’s presence the way the latter do. Here again Paul lays out another dimension of the ontological-transformative experience of the Circumcision.

### 5.2.3 KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS

Throughout Phil 3, Paul expresses the ontological nature of this identity in a roundabout way. In v. 8 he characterises the experience of having the Spirit of God and being in Christ in terms of having ‘knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord’ (γνῶσις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου). Here again the influence of Jer 9.23–6 can be felt (see §5.1.1.1.2). For Jeremiah engages the notion of ‘knowledge’ of the Lord in critiquing Israel, distinguishing between right and wrong knowledge (v. 24) much the way Paul does in Phil 3.8.

Knowledge (γνῶσις) in Paul, as in Scripture, is synonymous with being in an intimate relationship (Gen 29.5; Job 19.13; Jer 9.16).<sup>72</sup> It often refers to sexual relationships in Scripture (Gen 4.1; Jdgs 21.12). It also refers specifically to Israel’s relationship with God, or lack thereof (Jer 9.3; cf. 31.34; Hos 2.20).<sup>73</sup> Although Paul sometimes uses γνῶσις and γινώσκω to refer to the learning of facts (Phil 1.12; 2.19, 22; Rom 7.7; 2 Cor 6.6; Gal 3.7), in Phil 3.8 the sense is almost certainly a commixture of cognition and relationship, not purely cognitive (cf. 1 Cor 1.21; 8.3).

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<sup>72</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 75–6; Fee, *Philippians*, 100.

<sup>73</sup> Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 205.

### 5.2.3.1 THE STRUCTURE OF PHIL 3.8–11 AS KEY TO ITS MEANING

As noted above, v. 9b forms something of a digression from Paul's main point (see §5.1.1.1.2). The antithesis between the old and the new, the outward and the inward, remains at the fore of this digression. Then in v. 10 Paul returns to his principal concern: to reinforce and elaborate on what it means to have a relationship characterised by knowledge of Christ Jesus (so v. 8). Here in v. 10 he does not present his thoughts in the structured fashion as in the previous verses. We might refer to the structure of this verse as *organised confusion*. For while a certain shape to it can be found, towards the end of the pericope Paul seems to allow his excitement to get the better of him. He begins laying out thoughts in rapid succession, all of which lead to a culminating declaration about becoming like Christ and attaining to the resurrection from the dead (vv. 10–11). If one were to remove the digression of v. 9b from the text (though we do not propose this be done), it would become clear that v. 10a continues the flow of thought of v. 9a rather nicely.

### 5.2.3.2 WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS

Paul's argument might therefore be summarised as follows. All of my previous *stuff* is worthless compared to the knowledge of Christ Jesus (v. 8). So I throw away *all that stuff* in order to gain and be found in Christ (vv. 8b–9a), (and also) to know Christ in a deeply intimate and personal way, to know the power of his resurrection and to know the fellowship of his suffering in the same intimate manner (v. 10a). All of this—abandoning old things, suffering for Christ and having the Spirit of God—is well worth it, for it results in my taking on the same form as Christ himself in the here and now (v. 10b) and attainment to the resurrection from the dead in the future (v. 11).



The intimate-relational understanding of knowledge of Christ Jesus finds near definitive confirmation when one considers the fact that Paul already *knows* the Christ story and *the many facts about* Christ's sufferings and death. He does not desire more fact-knowledge about such matters. He desires now to grow in his relationship with Christ, to the point that it also manifests itself in his own life, in every imaginable way.

Knowledge of Christ is an umbrella term for the unique experience shared between Christ and the believing community. Having the Spirit of God inside and being in Christ lead one to this comprehensive knowledge-relationship that involves the entire human creature—the outward and the inward. Outwardly it inevitably leads to humiliation and suffering, just as it did for Christ. But inwardly it leads to a most remarkable experience of transformation, such that the believer comes to share in the very form of Christ himself, or what Albert Schweitzer has called the 'resurrection mode of existence' already in the present life.<sup>74</sup>

#### 5.2.4 BECOMING LIKE HIM IN SUFFERING AND DEATH (PHIL 3.10)

The change being effected inside believers by means of the dynamic relationship they now share with God is quite remarkable. What it looks like is once again evident in the structure of the statement in which it is found. Paul makes the participial phrase συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ a parallel to τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ. His point is this: sharing with Christ in suffering is equivalent to becoming like him in death. Apart from one another the two phrases are nearly impossible to understand. As Markus Bockmuehl observes, "These are merely two aspects of knowing Christ, not two different modes to be separated".<sup>75</sup> Separating them would also seem to weaken the poetic force of the

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<sup>74</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 101. Cf. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*, 126, cf. 284. Cf. Otto Schmitz, *Die Christus-Gemeinschaft des Paulus im Lichte seines Genitivgebrauchs* (NF 1.2; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1924), 185–8; Windisch, *Paulus und Christus*, 230.

<sup>75</sup> Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 214.

statement Paul is making. But when taken together, they articulate what we have called Paul's metamorphic programme (see §5.1.2.4).

The programme follows the same pattern as that which we found above in 2 Cor 3–5. Recall that the programme follows a basic pattern:

Spirit + Suffering = Transformation

Outward suffering yields radically different results inside those who possess the Spirit of God, who are in Christ and who have knowledge of Christ Jesus, than it does in the outsider.<sup>76</sup> This much seems clear by now. The difficulty lies in understanding into what believers are being changed. Let us explore this question for a moment.

#### 5.2.4.1 *THE συμμορφ- LANGUAGE OF vv. 10, 21*

According to Phil 3.10, Paul believes that his own suffering transforms him in a way that he is taking the same form as Christ, echoing almost exactly the experience he describes in 2 Cor 3–5 (see §5.1.2.2).<sup>77</sup> Three items are especially suggestive of such an interpretation. Firstly, it is revealing that the same συμμορφ- language occurs in both vv. 10 and 21. In the latter, it refers unequivocally to the ontological transformation that believers will receive at the resurrection. It involves the reconfiguration (μετασχηματίζω) of the physical element (σῶμα) of those in Christ such that theirs take the form (σύμμορφος) of Christ's own body.

It is hard to take the συμμορφ- language of v. 10 as a reference to present ethico-moral 'conformity' to Christ, when the latter, which is correlates with the event of total-body reconfiguration (μετασχηματίζω)

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Jewett, 'Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians', *NovT* 12 (1970): 362–90 [370]; cf. Fee, *Philippians*, 30; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 214–5.

<sup>77</sup> James A. Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament* (WUNT 2.270; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 38–9.

to occur at the resurrection, is clearly a reference to the ontological ‘conformity’ of the believer’s body to that of Christ. The more plausible way to understand these is to take them both as signifying the same type of change—i.e. ontological change. Keeping in mind the antithesis framing Paul’s argument in Phil 3, we can see that the inner-outer contrast is clearly at play in vv. 10–11 and 20–21 (+ vv. 18–19). This means that vv. 10, 20 describes the spiritual conformity occurring *inside* the believer at the present and vv. 11, 21 the bodily conformity that will take place on the believer’s *outside* at the resurrection.

#### 5.2.4.2 THE CHRIST STORY AS THE CHRISTIAN STORY

Secondly, as suggested above in §5.1.1.1.2, the Christ story of Phil 2.6–11 surely underlies this portion of ch. 3. For what happened to Christ (2.6–11) now happens to those in him (3.8–11). By employing the verb *συνμορφίζω*, Paul indicates that the experience of transformation (*μορφίζω*) is also one of union (*σύν-*). However, this is more than the ‘conformity’ of one’s life to that of Christ.<sup>78</sup> For as we have seen, the way the believer lives and inevitably suffers leads to inward, ontological transformation into Christlikeness. Just as Christ’s life of humility, suffering and death led to his resurrection, glorification and pneumatic transformation (Phil 2.5–11; 1 Cor 15.45), so also the believing community’s life of suffering is already achieving for them (2 Cor 4.17), by means of the Spirit inside them, a partial share in the life of the resurrection. At the Eschaton, the bodies of all believers will be reconfigured (*μετασχηματίζω*) such that they will ‘conform’ (*σύνμορφον*) to the glorious body of Christ (3.11, 21). For now believers must be confident in and even ‘boast’ about (vv. 2–3) the reality that is taking place inside them.

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<sup>78</sup> Contra Finlan, ‘*Theosis*’, 72–3.

#### 5.2.4.3 PNEUMATIC INCORPORATION BEGETS ONTOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Thirdly, we know that other Jews in Paul's day understood the implications of being in the divine presence. The experience *always carried profound ontological consequences* (see §5.1.2). The divine presence either destroys or, under the right circumstances, transforms the human creature.

Believers have united or been filled with the pneumatic presence of God, as Paul makes clear in his claim that they possess the Spirit of God and exist in Christ. He does this elsewhere when speaking about the way the believing community house God's pneumatic presence (1 Cor 6.19; 2 Cor 6.16). And his description of the Christian experience in 2 Cor 3–5 as a continuous vision of God in Christ by means of the Spirit provides strong support for this claim.

When in the presence of God, the human creature always undergoes ontological change. It just so happens that at the present the believer's change is relegated to his or her inner part. Believers are coming to look like Christ and becoming ever more glorious all the time. In this new Christian experience, this new way of being God's people, *pneumatic incorporation begets ontological transformation*.

#### 5.2.4.4 THE ANTITHESIS SUSTAINED

Paul has begun to *pick up the pace*, as it were, having become so excited about what he is talking about at this point in his letter that he begins moving rapidly towards the climax of his argument in vv. 10–11. But what is it he has been moving towards in the preceding verses (i.e. vv. 1–8b)? Simply this: the Philippians' identity and existence are based not on outward things but on inward. Believers are being transformed not just into some wraithlike concept called *Christ's death*. Rather, by way of their union with Christ and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, they

are being changed ontologically to be like Christ by means of their own suffering.<sup>79</sup> For suffering and death are now both those of the believer and of Christ by way of their unitive relationship (cf. 2 Cor 4.10).<sup>80</sup> *Inwardly* believers partake of a state of being that they shall possess *in toto* at the resurrection. For at the resurrection what is on the *outside* shall come to match what is on the inside: the state of being like that of Christ himself (vv. 10, 21).

### 5.2.5 STRIVING FOR *TELOS* (PHIL 3.12–17)

In vv. 12–17 Paul continues the main argument he began in v. 1. Here he strings together a series of rather eclectically connected statements about his new ambition in this life. Rather than using language of continual *metamorphosis*, however, Paul shifts to that of perfection or completion—literally *Telos*. The principal flow of this unit of text can be laid out thus:

v. 12a: Not that I have already obtained this

v. 12b: . . . or already *been made perfect* (ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι)

v. 12c: but I press on to *grab hold of [Christ] as also I have been grabbed hold of by Christ*.

v. 13: . . . *stretching forward towards what is before*.

v. 14: I press on towards the goal for the prize of *the high calling of God* in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

v. 15: *Therefore, as many as are perfect* (ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι), *we should think this way*; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

v. 16: *In any case, unto which you have arrived, align with this same* [level of *Telos*].

v. 17: Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.

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<sup>79</sup> Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 215; Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 101–40.

<sup>80</sup> Wilhelm Michaelis, ‘πάσχω κτλ’, in *TDNT* 5.904–39 [932].

Paul maintains the principal concern of his thesis of vv. 2–3: the Philippians are to remember their status as the Circumcision. Their new status and the benefits they reap as such, their continual transformation into Christ’s form (vv. 8–11), and progress towards *Telos* should determine the way they orient themselves towards life in the present (vv. 12–17).

#### 5.2.5.1 THE PURSUIT OF TELOS

Being the Circumcision involves latching on to one another. Paul describes it as ‘grabbing hold of’ Christ and ‘being grabbed by’ him, the result of which is the obtainment of *Telos*. Paul has ‘not yet obtained’ the full metamorphosis into Christ’s form, nor has he been ‘made perfect’ (v. 12a, b, c), but he strives towards this end daily (vv. 13–14). He seeks to realise that final glorious state of being to be given to him at the resurrection (v. 21).<sup>81</sup>

#### 5.2.5.2 TELOS IN PAUL AND PHILO

Paul’s idea of *Telos* is remarkably similar to that of Philo.<sup>82</sup> Both Paul and Philo conceive of *Telos* in terms of the ultimate goal towards which one should strive (Phil 3.12–17; *Decal.* 81). Both believe that some humans have reached a higher level of perfection than others (*Agr.* 159; Phil 3.15–16). Both associate *Telos* with cognitive change (*Decal.* 81; *Migr.* 139), or ‘knowledge’ (vv. 8–11). And both believe *Telos* to be the joint work of God and humankind (Phil 2.12–13; *Decal.* 81).

#### 5.2.5.3 TO PURSUE METAMORPHOSIS IS TO PURSUE TELOS

In vv. 12–17 Paul exhorts the Philippians using different concepts to frame the experience he described in vv. 1–11. The theme of ontological

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<sup>81</sup> Cerfaux, *Theology*, 317.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter three.

metamorphosis into Christlikeness is now conceived as the pursuit of *Telos*. As Segal has written, 'In this context, perfection appears to be a result of his [Paul's] transformation, the realization that knowledge of God comes not from Jewish law, but from being conformed to Christ, which is apparently a progressive process'.<sup>83</sup> While the process has begun already and should govern the way they live, the transformation will culminate at the Eschaton.

### 5.3 BEING THE HEAVENLY COMMUNITY NOW (PHIL 3.18–21)

Having expressed his thoughts in vv. 12–17 on the present state of being of the believing community, expanding on his initial suppositions in vv. 1–11, Paul is now ready in vv. 18–21 to make one last affirmation about what it means to be the Circumcision. His chapter-long argument reaches its apex in vv. 20–21, where he makes a declaration that draws together everything he has said up to this point.<sup>84</sup> So far Paul has discussed the believers' experience in terms of their changing 'form' (μορφή) in vv. 8–11 and progressive 'perfection' or 'completion' (τέλος) in vv. 12–17. Now in v. 20 he will speak of this experience in terms of 'existence' (ὑπάρχω).

#### 5.3.1 THE MUTILATION AS EARTHLY THINKERS

Paul ends Phil 3 the same way he began: by reinforcing the antithesis between those who are God's true people and those who merely think they are. As he did in v. 2, so also in vv. 18–21 he begins by criticising his opponents.<sup>85</sup> He is full of emotion at this point, weeping as he pens his thoughts on the present matters:

18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the

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<sup>83</sup> Segal, *Convert*, 142.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Livesey (*Circumcision*, 95–100), who observes the link between the περιτομή and Paul's remarks on heaven in Phil 3.3, 20.

belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things (vv. 18–19).

Paul literally calls his opponents ‘earthly thinkers’ (ἐπίγεια φρονούντες; cf. *Theaet.* 176a–77a). They focus on outward, fleshly things and do not understand what it means truly to be God’s people.<sup>86</sup> The *Telos* of the such people is summed up in one word: ‘destruction’ (ἀπώλεια). Reiterating a point made in 1.28 again in 3.19, Paul intimates that the opponents’ very existence is and will never be anything but *destruction*.

### 5.3.2 THE CIRCUMCISION AS THE HEAVENLY COMMUNITY

Verse 20 then marks a shift from Paul’s critique of his opponents to a positive declaration about his audience, the Circumcision. Recall what he told them in v. 3: ‘For it is we who are the Circumcision’ (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή). Now in v. 20 he will make this same declaration in a different way. In this case, he claims literally, ‘For our πολίτευμα exists in heavens’ (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανῶς ὑπάρχει).

The Circumcision are reaping truly incredible benefits never before experienced by anyone on earth, including God’s people (vv. 3–17). Now he associates them with what he calls a πολίτευμα, the nature of which we discuss shortly. Just as the Mutilation (κατατομή) and earthly thinkers (ἐπίγεια φρονούντες) are the same, so also the Circumcision (περιτομή) and Community (πολίτευμα) are as well. What Paul has said about the περιτομή therefore applies also to the πολίτευμα.

### 5.3.3 THE HEAVENLY COMMUNITY (PHIL 3.20)

The chief question at this point is this: what does Paul mean when he equates the Circumcision (περιτομή) with the ‘Community [which] exists in heavens’ (πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανῶς ὑπάρχει)? The answer seems clear when we take Paul’s language seriously without attempting to rearrange

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<sup>86</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 457; Segal, *Convert*, 141.



it or substitute its components with terms that are not in the text. A fresh look at the constituent terms of v. 20 should lead us to make some sound conclusions about what it relates to us about the Circumcision.

#### 5.3.3.1 *πολίτευμα AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY*

First, the critical noun in v. 20 is *πολίτευμα*.<sup>87</sup> Although many insist on translating *πολίτευμα* with the English ‘citizenship’, this is a very poor translation that skews the meaning of the verse quite badly. *πολίτευμα* was *never* used this way in or around Paul’s day.<sup>88</sup> ‘Citizenship’ is a better rendering of *πολιτεία* than *πολίτευμα* (see Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.127b; 4.1293a) and is thus an unacceptable translation of *πολίτευμα*.<sup>89</sup> What would it even mean in the context of what Paul has argued so far that *our citizenship is in heaven*?

A simple way to categorise this family of terms is to understand *πόλις* as ‘city’, *πολιτεύω* or *πολιτεύομαι* as ‘conduct (in that city)’ and *πολιτεία* as ‘citizenship (in that city)’. *πολίτευμα* would then signify a socio-political body that is similar to a ‘city’ (*πόλις*). The *πολίτευμα*, however, is different from a *πόλις* in that the former can actually be found within the latter, though Philo equates these on occasion, as we see in §5.3.3.1.2.

In short, a *πολίτευμα* is a collection of people who have united together to form a group in the midst of a larger city or state in which they are a minority in size and influence. Many Jews in Paul’s day used *πολίτευμα* and *πολιτεύομαι* of themselves as Jews living outside of their

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<sup>87</sup> W. Ruppel, ‘Πολίτευμα. Bedeutungsgeschichte eines staatsrechtlichen Terminus’, *Philologus* 82 (1927): 268–312, 433–54; cf. Hermann Strathmann, ‘πολις κτλ’, in *TDNT* 6.516–35.

<sup>88</sup> Lincoln, *Paradise*, 99–100.

<sup>89</sup> A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 184–85; cf. Lincoln, *Paradise*, 100; Liddell and Scott s.v. iv. 2; Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 156; A.F.J. Klijn, ‘Paul’s Opponents in Philippians 3’, *NovT* 7 (1965): 278–84 [283]; I-Jin Loh and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (HFT 19; Stuttgart: UBS, 1977), 118.

homeland.<sup>90</sup> However, given the imperial-colonial baggage attached to the English terms ‘colony’ and ‘commonwealth’, particularly in Pauline studies, we render πολίτευμα as ‘community’.<sup>91</sup>

#### 5.3.3.1.1 PAUL’S CHOICE OF περιτομή AND πολίτευμα

Paul’s reason for choosing to speak of the Philippians in terms of a πολίτευμα may be found once again in the way he structures the chapter. As noted already, vv. 2–3 and 18–21 form the *bookends* to his argument. They are also to be understood as paralleling one another. Paul may have found the two terms fitting, in part, based on alliteration and syllabification: that is, because each begins with the same letter (π) and each has four syllables. Having already used a number of creative rhetorical devices to this point, it would not be surprising to find that here again he has employed a rather subtle one which would surely have been picked up in a setting in which the letter were to be read audibly. This is not to ignore the rich theology intrinsic in each term. It is only to say that Paul may have had more than one reason for choosing to use these over others.

#### 5.3.3.1.2 πολίτευμα AMONG PAUL’S DIASPORA-JEWISH CONTEMPORARIES

πολίτευμα carried a distinctly religious flavour in Jewish writings in and around Paul’s day.<sup>92</sup> It signified not just a community, but a community of

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<sup>90</sup> Ernest C. Miller Jr., ‘Πολιτεύεσθε in Philippians 1.27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations’, *JSNT* 15 (1982): 86–96; Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie* (FRLANT 90; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 240–7; Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief*; Martin, *Philippians*, 147; Peter Siber, *Mit Christus Leben: eine Studie zur paulinischen Auferstehungshoffnung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971), 122–6.

<sup>91</sup> Raymond R. Brewer, ‘The meaning of Politeuesthe in Philippians 1.27’, *JBL* 73 (1954): 76–83; Darrell J. Dougherty, ‘Citizens of Heaven: Philippians 3.2–21’, *NTS* 41 (1995): 102–22; Peter Oakes, ‘Remapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians’, *JSNT* 27 (2005): 301–22; idem, *Philippians*, 178; N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 229–30. But see the critiques of this view by Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 363–88; Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

Diaspora Jews—God’s people dwelling outside of their homeland (Jos *Ant.* 12.2; 18.9; 2 Macc 6.1; 11.25; 12.7; 3 Macc 3.4; 4 Macc 2.8; 4.23).<sup>93</sup> And it often had deeply eschatological undertones, having been used of the remnant whom God would rescue upon his return to earth.<sup>94</sup>

While there are obvious differences between Philo and Paul, the way Philo uses πολίτευμα may be helpful in understanding Phil 3.20. In general, Philo employs πολίτευμα in reference to the ideal realm, or at least to some facet of it. He uses the term in *De agricultura* of the realm of Virtue, in which those who overcome the passions are enrolled (§81; cf. *Ios.* 69). In *De confusion linguarum* he expands on the myth of the tower of Babel (Gen 11.4). He points out that the humans set out to build a city and tower made of bricks and stones. However, Moses thought there were *other* cities as well, one of which is not even built upon the earth. Rather, this city (πόλις) is literally one ‘which humans carry around with them in their souls’ (§107) and the archetype and model of other cities (§108). Philo here makes an intriguing move. In addition to referring to this city as a πόλις, he refers to it also as a type of πολίτευμα—one in which good humans are enrolled (§109; cf. *Spec.* 2.45). What he has said about the πόλις which exists in the human soul thus also applies to the πολίτευμα.

Amid the differences between Paul and Philo, their use of πολίτευμα does seem to have a significant similarity. Each relates the πολίτευμα to that ideal (so Philo) or heavenly (so Paul) realm. And each believes the people of God, whether it be those who pursue Virtue (so Philo) or the believing community (so Paul), to have a share in this ideal/heavenly πολίτευμα *already in this life* (see §5.3.3.2). Philo explicitly states that the experience of the πολίτευμα is an inner one, taking place in the soul. Given what we have seen so far, and if our comparison with Philo is to be maintained, the experience of the heavenly

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<sup>92</sup> So Miller Jr., ‘Πολιτεύεσθε’, 86–96; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Clement (1 Clem. 3.4; 6.1; 21.1; 44.6; 51.2; 54.4) and Polycarp (*Phil.* 5.2).

<sup>94</sup> Miller Jr., ‘Πολιτεύεσθε’, 86–96.

πολίτευμα is an inner, spiritual (to use the term very loosely) experience that *is occurring* inside the believer even now (see §5.3.3.2).

#### 5.3.3.1.3 THE CULTIC FLAVOUR OF ΠΟΛΙΤΕΥΜΑ IN PHIL 3

Furthermore, Paul seems here to maintain the cultic flavour established earlier in v. 3 where he uses the term λατρεύω. We saw above that key to the identity of the Circumcision is their experience of pneumatic service or worship (see §5.2.1). This flavour can be felt in the Syriac NT as well. Given that the Syriac is the earliest translation of the NT, it may be important for gaining insight into the way early translators understood the Greek terms of the NT.<sup>95</sup> In Syr. Phil 3.20 we read:

ܕܢܝܠ ܕܗܝ ܗܠܝܫܝ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ

But our ܗܠܝܫܝ is in heaven.<sup>96</sup>

Syr. NT uses ܗܠܝܫܝ to translate πολιτεύμα. ܗܠܝܫܝ has a range of meanings, among which is the idea of ‘labour’ or ‘service’—in particular that of the Tabernacle and Temple.<sup>97</sup> It is used of עֲבֹדָה ([Priestly] Service’) in the HB (Exod 12.25; Ezek 48.19) and θρησκεία (‘worship’) in the NT (Col 2.18; cf. 1 Pet 4.3), and it is equivalent to פֹּלֶחַן or פֹּלֶחֶן in the Aramaic Targumim (*Tg. Ezek.* 29.18; *Tg. Deut.* 26.6).<sup>98</sup>

Knowing what we now know about the quasi-cultic nature of Paul’s message in Phil 3, the translation of πολιτεύμα with ܗܠܝܫܝ is certainly suggestive. The earliest translators of the NT saw the same thing we are seeing in the term πολιτεύμα: that through it Paul is

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<sup>95</sup> Robert F. Hull, Jr., *The Story of the New Testament Text: Movers, Materials, Motives, Methods, and Models* (SBLRBS 58; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 124–6.

<sup>96</sup> Syr. NT text is from George Henry Gwilliam et al. (eds.), *The New Testament and Psalms in Syriac* (Istanbul, Turkey: United Bible Societies, 1987).

<sup>97</sup> Smith 437.

<sup>98</sup> Jastrow 1141; Jennings 171 Brockelmann 572; Costaz 271.

declaring the community of believers in Philippi to be a *new* type of people of God, who exist together ‘in heaven’ (ܠܥܠܡܐ). The very identity and nature of the believing community in fact stems from their being a *transcendent community of cultic servant-worshippers*.

#### 5.3.3.2 ὑπάρχω AND CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE

Second, the key verb in v. 20 is ὑπάρχει, the present active of ὑπάρχω. As with πολίτευμα, one issue with regard to ὑπάρχω is *how* to render it in translation. It seems to us that in this instance ὑπάρχω be understood *existentially* rather than simply *copulatively*. In other words, it is best understood when one renders it with the English ‘exist’ rather than the more common but less dynamic verb ‘is’. Gordon Fee rightly observes that ‘in this usage’, ὑπάρχω, ‘rather than a form of “to be”, is probably significant, in that it emphasizes the actual existence of our heavenly commonwealth’.<sup>99</sup> Fee correctly points out earlier in his commentary that ‘although at times interchangeable with εἶναι’, in Phil 2.6 and later in 3.20 ‘it very likely carries its primary sense of “to exist (really)”’.<sup>100</sup>

#### 5.3.3.2.1 ὑπάρχω AS EXISTENCE IN PHILIPPIANS

Two observations support this interpretation. Firstly, the English ‘exist’ best captures the force of ὑπάρχω as Paul is using it in this letter in particular. Elsewhere in his writings the verb is largely synonymous with εἶμι (‘to be’), in which cases a copulative understanding would be correct. This is not the case in Philippians, however, where ὑπάρχω appears only two times: once in 2.6 and once in 3.20. In 2.6 Paul uses the participle ὑπάρχων in speaking about Christ’s ‘existence’ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ (‘in the form of God’). In 3.20, then, he uses the same term to make a claim about

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<sup>99</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 379 n. 18.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 202 n. 40.

the ‘existence’ of the πολίτευμα. This would make sense given that Paul links the Christ story of 2.6–11 with the Christian story of 3.20–1, and hence the change in existence that Christ experiences with the change Christians are experiencing currently (see §5.1.1.1.2).<sup>101</sup>

Secondly, that Paul has ‘existence’ in mind when he uses ὑπάρχω in Philippians becomes clear by comparing it to the way he uses εἰμί in the same letter.<sup>102</sup> If he says, for example, ‘To all . . . who are (οὖσιν) in Philippi’ (1.1), the stress lies on *where* his audience resides, not necessarily on their ontological state of existence. But if he says, ‘Jesus was existing/exists (ὑπάρχων) in the form of God’ (2.6), the stress lies on Jesus’ God-existence. Were Paul to intend to say something like, ‘Our citizenship is in heaven’ just as those to whom he is writing ‘are’ (οὖσιν) in Philippi, then he would probably use the verb εἰμί in v. 20. But he does not. He instead uses the verb he uses in 2.6 to express his thoughts on Christ’s divine *existence*. ὑπάρχω in *Philippians* can hardly be taken as anything other than existential.

#### 5.3.3.2.2 ὑπάρχω AS EXISTENCE OUTSIDE OF PAUL

The existential sense of ὑπάρχω can be found outside of Paul. In Plato’s *Phaedo*, for example, ὑπάρχω refers to the ontological state of the soul (80a–e). In discussing the divine and immortal state of the soul and the process by which it separates itself from the body at death, Socrates asserts:

Then if it [the soul] is in such a condition, it goes away into that which is like itself, into the invisible, divine, immortal, and wise, and when it arrives (ὑπάρχει) there it is (εἶναι) happy, freed from error and folly and fear and fierce loves and all the other human ills, and as the initiated say, lives in truth through all after time with the gods (*Phaedo* 81a).

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<sup>101</sup> Flanagan, ‘Note’, 8–9.

<sup>102</sup> εἰμί occurs some 17 times in *Philippians*.

Here the verbs ὑπάρχω and εἰμί appear side by side (cf. *Hip. Ma.* 292d). Harold North Fowler translates εἰμί ‘is’, which seems to us unproblematic. εἰμί here refers to the state of wellness of the soul when in its true divine *home*. However, ὑπάρχω is probably not a reference to the soul’s *arrival* at the divine realm, as Fowler would have us think, but to the divine *existence* it possesses as a result of its union with that realm, which ‘is like itself’. Socrates claims that the soul becomes happy because, having been freed from the mortal body, it now ‘exists’ there without encumbrance.

Several other examples support this understanding of ὑπάρχω. Epictetus uses ὑπάρχω in trying to understand whether or not something ‘exists’ (ὅτι ὑπάρχει) or ‘does not exist’ (ὅτι οὐχ ὑπάρχει, *Discourses* 1.18).<sup>103</sup> Galen explains that the faculty of Growth ‘exists’ (ὑπάρχει) already within the human while still *in utero* (*Nat. Fac.* 1.7). Cassius explains to Brutus that humans do not really see images and shapes of things, but only their impressions. The impressions have no real ‘existence’ (ὑπάρχοντος). All that ‘exists’ (ὑπάρχει) in the soul is the wax-like material (Plutarch, *Brutus* 37).<sup>104</sup> Aeschines asks which of the virtues ‘exists’ (ὑπάρχει) in Demosthenes (*Against Ctesiphon* 3.170).<sup>105</sup> Though the ‘existential’ use of ὑπάρχω is rare, it does find attestation in antiquity outside of Paul.

#### 5.3.3.2.3 ὑπάρχω AS PRESENT STATE OF EXISTENCE

Paul claims that the Community, literally, ‘exists’ in heaven. The importance of the present tense of ὑπάρχω cannot be overstated. There

<sup>103</sup> Greek text of Epictetus’ *Discourses* is that of Epictetus, *Epicteti Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* (BSGRT; ed. H. Schenkl; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1916).

<sup>104</sup> Greek text and English translation of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* is that of Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Lives, Volume 6: Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus* (LCL 98; ed. and trans. B. Perrin; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1918).

<sup>105</sup> Greek text and English translation of Aeschines’ *Against Ctesiphon* is that of Aeschines, *The Speeches of Aeschines* (LCL 106; ed. and trans. C.D. Adams; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1919).

is no indication that Paul has any other period of time in mind than the present, the here and now. The Community collectively ‘exist’ (lit.: ὑπάρχει) in heaven, already, even now.<sup>106</sup> This leaves us to ask, *in what sense* do the πολίτευμα of believers actually exist in heaven?

### 5.3.3.3 ἐν οὐρανῶς AS LOCATION AND STATE OF EXISTENCE

Third, then, the answer to this final question lies in the ambiguous phrase ἐν οὐρανῶς. We can be sure that in this case heaven is the place or location called heaven, and no mere concept. After all, it is the place from which Christ will come when he returns (v. 21). But it seems more than that. It has to do not only with *where* the Community *exists* at the present, but with their state of existence therein.

Andrew Lincoln offers a study of this phrase as it appears in 2 Cor 5.1 which may shed light on its meaning in Phil 3.20.<sup>107</sup> He argues that Paul uses the preposition ἐν precisely because of its fluidity in meaning. It can have multiple meanings even in the same context—a concept we have called mystical empowerment (see §1.2.4). 2 Cor 5.1 is one example of this. And it is fitting for our study that the object of the preposition here is οὐρανός, just as it is in Phil 3.20. In 2 Cor 5.1 Paul uses ἐν in describing the resurrection body. He writes, ‘For we know that, if our temporary, earthly house is destroyed, we have a structure from God (ἐκ θεοῦ), an eternal dwelling *in the heavens* (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανῶς) that is not built by hands’. The phrase ἐν τοῖς οὐρανῶς carries both a ‘locative’ sense, having to do with the location of the ‘eternal dwelling’, and an adverbial or qualitative sense, having to do with the ontological quality of the

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<sup>106</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 461; Doughty, ‘Citizens’, 102–22. Contra Helmut Koester, ‘The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians 3)’, *NTS* 8 (1961/2): 317–32 [328]; Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1934), 114–16.

<sup>107</sup> Lincoln, *Paradise*, 51–2, 60–1; cf. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 127–9.



‘eternal dwelling’.<sup>108</sup> The location of the believer’s body is directly tied to its ontological state of being. The body which is ‘in heaven’ is therefore also ‘heavenly’ in existence.<sup>109</sup>

In Phil 3.20 Paul thus states that ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανῶς ὑπάρχει. Two items from our analysis of Phil 3 should influence our interpretation of this datival phrase. One, Paul has maintained an inner-outer antithesis since the outset (vv. 2–3). The experience of the Mutilation is purely outward, and is characterised by death, decay and destruction (Phil 1.28; 3.19). The Christian experience is on the contrary one of radical inward transformation into Christlikeness even now (cf. 2 Cor 3–5). Two, vv. 10–11 and 20–21 are intended to parallel one another thematically. In vv. 11 and 21 Paul remarks on the future, outward (or total-body) event of resurrection, while in vv. 10 and 20 his emphasis is clearly on the present, inward experience of change.

When Paul declares in v. 20 that the believing πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανῶς ὑπάρχει, he is offering a climactic summary statement that ties together everything he has said since v. 1. This is the same rhetorical tack he employs in 2 Cor 3–5 as well, where he summarises his defence with that climactic declaration: ‘If anyone is in Christ: new creature!’ (5.17; see §5.1.2.2). And he does the same thing in Gal 3–6, drawing his argument to a close with yet another statement about the ‘new creation’ (6.15). Rather than new creation imagery, however, in Phil 3.20 Paul employs cultic-community imagery. He declares here in summative fashion, if we may paraphrase his words at this point:

The Community to which we belong inwardly presently exists in heaven and, by consequence, we as members now partake of the heavenly state of existence.

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<sup>108</sup> Lincoln, *Paradise*, 61; Robertson 584–91; Greenlee 33–34; Moulton and Milligan 210.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Stoic Understanding’, 110.

#### 5.4 A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

Like his Qumran-Sectarian contemporaries, Paul believed there to be a distinction between the inner and outer parts of the human. The human has lost its pre-Fall state of existence, and the outer body is fallen, feeble and corrupted. But the inner part has the potential for incredible ontological change (NS). The Christ-event and release of the Spirit have led to a change in the venue where humankind meets God (P<sup>1</sup>). It is no longer the Jerusalem Temple but inside the believer (P<sup>2</sup>). For those who possess the Spirit, suffering leads towards the DHE, in which both human and divine advance towards one another (DHE: MA). And as at Qumran, the encounter that occurs is a multilateral encounter shared by the believing community, God in Christ and even heaven itself. Each part mixes together in such a way that it is apparently inseparable from one another (*Mix*  $\Sigma$ ). Rather than prescribe any sort of asceticism for his recipients to follow, such as we find throughout HZ and in *Opif.* 144 above, Paul tries to explain that the suffering believers endure because of their faith in Christ in fact assists in the overall transformation they experience. While this suffering breaks down their seemingly centripetal bodies (Centri*P*), it is a catalyst for their inward glorification and transformation. And by means of their union with Christ and the Spirit, the believers become rather centrifugally united to one another as well (Centri*F*). The change that results from this encounter is intriguing: the believing community *both* return to their edenic state of glory, retrieving the ontological composition lost at the Fall (MT: TRH), *and* become an entirely new type of creature (MT: BH).

#### 5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Everything Paul has said to the Philippians regarding their identity as the Circumcision (περιτομή) and its effects on their ontological state of being

reaches its pinnacle when he declares them to be the heavenly Community (πολίτευμα). By asserting that they as a Community exist in heaven, he is likening their collective ontological state of being not to that of Christ per se but to the realm in which Christ dwells: heaven (cf. Eph 1.20). Those who possess the Spirit and who are in Christ have united with Christ and his dwelling place and have come to share in the ontological properties of that place.<sup>110</sup> Inwardly the ontological composition of those who are members of the heavenly Community is the same as that of the place they now *exist*, namely, heaven.

Much like the Qumran community, Paul believes a collective transformation to have taken place within and among those of his own community. His ontoanthropology is particularly important for what it reveals about the centripetality-centrifugality question. We shall return to Paul in chapter eight, but for now we shift from an investigation of Genus 3 to a study of Genus 4.

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology*, 28; idem, 'Complete', 186; Litwa, *Transformed*, 148.

## **PART IV**

### **GENUS 4—THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION**

## CHAPTER 6

### A MEAL OF GASTRONOMICAL SIGNIFICANCE TRANSFORMATION AND THE NEW CREATION IN *JOSEPH AND ASENETH*

#### 6.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

We have entered the final phase of our exploration. The present chapter marks the beginning of a two-chapter treatment of Genus 4 (Theophagic Transformation). This is by far the most undervalued of the four genera under investigation, and perhaps the most illuminating. We focus our attention here on the species we have termed Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism (Species 4A). In this is found a remarkable account in which mystical ingestion is tied to ontological transformation.

This, our sixth chapter, explores the ancient work called *Joseph and Aseneth* (*Jos. Asen.*). *Jos. Asen.* is an important Jewish-Greek text from Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism which was well known in antiquity (see §6.1.2).<sup>1</sup> The experience of theophagic transformation expressed in *Jos. Asen.*, as the title of the chapter indicates, has truly astronomical significance, as it is tied to the ancient motif of new creation.

##### 6.1.1 OVERVIEW OF *JOSEPH AND ASENETH*

*Jos. Asen.* is a Hellenistic romance that expands on the brief scriptural reference to the marriage between Joseph and Aseneth in Gen 41.45 (cf. v. 50; 46.20).<sup>2</sup> Aseneth is the daughter of Pentephres, the priest of Heliopolis (*Jos. Asen.* 1.6–14; 2.16). Although a virgin, she is deeply

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<sup>1</sup> Randall D. Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (JSPSup 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 255–6.

<sup>2</sup> On identifying *Jos. Asen.* as a romance, see Stephanie West, 'Joseph and Aseneth: A Neglected Greek Romance', *CQ* 24 (1974): 70–81; Chesnutt, *Death*, 76–91; Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 186–7; Peter Weimar, 'Formen frühjüdischer Literatur: eine Skizze', in *Literatur und Religion des Frühjudentums: eine Einführung* (eds. J. Maier and J. Schreiner; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1973), 123–62; John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 204–16.

involved in the worship of pagan idols and thus an unsuitable bride for a patriarch of Joseph's stature (2.5; 3.10; 8.4–8; cf. 20.4). Joseph nevertheless seeks her hand in marriage, after which she realises her life of error, repents and begins her conversion to Judaism (8.9; 9.1). Her conversion spans chs. 8–21, and at the end the two are joined in marriage (ch. 21). Though it is predominantly a romance, it contains an important apocalyptic section in chs. 14–17 which will be the focus of our study.<sup>3</sup>

By enhancing this biblical tale, *Jos. Asen.* addresses the inherent problem in the story, namely, the marriage of Joseph, a biblical patriarch, to Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest.<sup>4</sup> That Aseneth must convert to the biblical faith before marrying Joseph is of primary concern to *Jos. Asen.* Without change, Aseneth's marriage to Joseph cannot be satisfactorily explained.<sup>5</sup> *Jos. Asen.* validates Aseneth as the spouse of a patriarch not just by telling the story of her conversion to Judaism, but by depicting this event as a change on an ontological level.

The less obvious but equally important problem with which *Jos. Asen.* is dealing is the fall of creation. Adam and Eve have left the world in bad shape. Aseneth's conversion-transformation is not just to justify the patriarch's marriage to a pagan woman, but it has truly astronomical implications. The authors have set it forth as playing a role in the very reversal of fallen creation and the onset of the *new creation* (see §6.2.5).

*Jos. Asen.* is 29 chapters long, though most scholars divide it into two parts: chs. 1–21 and 22–29. Our exploration is limited to the first part. For one thing, some scholars are unsure of the relationship between the two parts and whether they belonged together in the earliest stages of

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<sup>3</sup> On the apocalyptic section, see Humphrey, *Ladies*, 46–48; eadem, 'On Bees and Best Guesses: The Problem of *Sitz im Leben* from Internal Evidence, as Illustrated by Joseph and Aseneth', *CR: Biblical Studies* 7 (1999): 223–36; Gideon Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (EJL 10; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 17; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, 'Religious Experience and the Apocalypses', in *Experientia, Volume 1*, 125–44 [134].

<sup>4</sup> See the recent discussion in Ronald Charles, 'A Postcolonial Reading of *Joseph and Aseneth*', *JSP* 18 (2009): 265–83 [265–6].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 274–6.

the work's transmission.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, the focus of chs. 1–21 is on Aseneth's conversion, culminating in her glorious transformation. The second part focuses largely on Joseph's brothers, while Aseneth plays at best a secondary role.<sup>7</sup>

### 6.1.2 MANUSCRIPTS AND DATE OF *JOSEPH AND ASENETH*

Manuscript evidence for *Jos. Asen.* makes it a very difficult writing to date. Earliest manuscript attestation is a Syriac work from the sixth c. C.E.<sup>8</sup> Scholars propose a date either as late as the fourth to fifth c. C.E. or as early as the first c. B.C.E.<sup>9</sup> While we tend to agree with Christoph Burchard and others who view *Jos. Asen.* as an Egyptian-Jewish work dating between the first c. B.C.E. and second c. C.E., our discussion does not depend on an early dating. The original version of *Jos. Asen.* was likely composed in Greek, though scholars disagree as to which recension represents the more original, the short or the long.<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise

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<sup>6</sup> Richard I. Pervo, 'Joseph and Aseneth and the Greek Novel', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1976 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 10; ed. George MacRae; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1976), 171–82; cf. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1995), 170–84.

<sup>7</sup> For arguments in favour of reading the two parts separately, see e.g. Christoph Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth: A New Translation and Introduction', in *OTP* 2.177–247; idem, 'The Present State of Research on *Joseph and Aseneth*', in *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism II: Religion, Literature, and Society in Ancient Israel, Formative Christianity and Judaism: Ancient Israel and Christianity* (eds. J. Neusner et al.; Lanham, Md.: UPA, 1987), 31–52 [36]; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Source-book of Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); eadem; *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 40.

<sup>8</sup> For discussion and references, see Christoph Burchard, 'The Text of *Joseph and Aseneth* Reconsidered', *JSP* 14 (2005): 83–96. Other versions of the work include Slavonic, Armenian, Latin and Middle English.

<sup>9</sup> For a late dating, see e.g. Kraemer, *Aseneth*; eadem, 'The Book of Aseneth', in *Searching the Scriptures II: A Feminist Commentary* (ed. E.S. Fiorenza; London: SCM, 1994), 859–88. For an earlier dating, see George J. Brooke, 'Men and Women as Angels in *Joseph and Aseneth*', *JSP* 14 (2005): 159–77; Dieter Sänger, 'Erwägungen zur historischen Einordnung und zur Datierung von "Joseph und Aseneth"', *ZNW* 76 (1985): 86–106; Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (StPB 13; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 109; Bohak, *Heliopolis*; Chesnutt, *Death*, 76–85; Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 187–8; John J. Collins, 'Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?', *JSP* 14 (2005): 97–112.

<sup>10</sup> Christoph Burchard, 'Reconsidered', 83–96; cf. the *editio princeps* by P. Battifol, 'Le Livre de la Prière d'Asenath', in idem, *Studia Patristica: Études d'ancienne*

noted, we follow Burchard's reconstruction of the Greek text as well as his English translations and chapter and verse divisions.<sup>11</sup>

### 6.1.3 THEOPHAGY DEFINED

Since the present portion of our thesis (Part IV) focuses on theophagic transformation, it should be helpful that we define 'theophagy' before moving forward. Theophagy is defined as 'the ritualized eating of a god, either symbolically or mystically' and occurs when a 'worshiper explicitly identifies the food as the god, or at least as symbolic of the god'.<sup>12</sup> The form of theophagy we discuss below can include eating heavenly food through the mouth or ingesting the light emanating from God's presence through the eyes, though our emphasis will lie on the latter. The phenomenon we shall discuss here and in chapter seven involves the mystical ingestion of God's presence and a resultant (and sometimes contemporaneous) ontological change. The phenomenon in this form rests on a confusion of the senses, where sight becomes a means to obtaining 'nourishment' or 'satisfaction'.

## 6.2 CONVERSION AND NEW CREATION IN *JOSEPH AND ASENETH*

The central theme in *Jos. Asen.* is the conversion of Aseneth. E.P. Sanders may well be right that conversion is the *raison d'être* of the work.<sup>13</sup>

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*littérature chrétienne* (Paris: Leroux, 1889–1890), 1–115. And see the recension of the shorter text edited by Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*.

<sup>11</sup> Chapter and verse division are those of Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 199–200. And Greek text is that of Christoph Burchard, Carsten Burfeind and Uta Barbara Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben* (PVTG 5: Leiden: Brill, 2003); cf. Christoph Burchard, 'Ein vorläufiger griechischer Text von Joseph und Aseneth', *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (SVTP 13; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 161–209. See also the English translation of David Cook, 'Joseph and Aseneth', in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H.F.D. Sparks; Oxford: OUP, 1984), 473–503.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Dunn, *Magic Power Language Symbol: A Magician's Exploration of Linguistics* (Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn Worldwide, 2008), 195. Cf. Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (Sozomena 7; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 354–8; Preserved Smith, *A Short History of Christian Theophagy* (London: Open Court, 1922).

<sup>13</sup> E.P. Sanders, 'The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism', in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in*



Although this episode covers the majority of *Jos. Asen.* 1–21, our focus lies on the apocalyptic section in chs. 14–17. This section recounts the encounter between Aseneth and the heavenly visitor who, through a series of dialogues and events, confirms her legitimacy as one of God’s people.

### 6.2.1 THE HEAVENLY *ANTHROPOS* AND ASENETH’S RITUAL PURITY

While turning from her idolatrous way of life and converting to Judaism, Aseneth has a life-changing encounter with a so-called ‘man from heaven’ (ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) in her private chambers. *Jos. Asen.* 14 recounts this meeting:

14.1 And when Aseneth had ceased making confession to the Lord, behold, the morning star rose out of heaven in the east. And Aseneth saw it and rejoiced and said, ‘So the Lord God listened to my prayer, because this star rose as a messenger and herald of the light of the great day’ (διότι ὁ ἀστήρ οὗτος ἄγγελος καὶ κήρυξ τοῦ φωτός τῆς μεγάλης ἡμέρας ἀνέτειλεν). 2 And Aseneth kept looking, and behold, close to the morning star, the heaven was torn apart and great and unutterable light appeared (καὶ ἔτι ἑώρα Ἀσενέθ καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἑωσφόρου ἐσχίσθη ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἐφάνη φῶς μέγα καὶ ἀνεκλάλητον). 3 And Aseneth saw (it) and fell on (her) face on the ashes. And a man came to her from heaven and stood by Aseneth’s head (καὶ ἦλθε πρὸς αὐτὴν ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔστη ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς Ἀσενέθ). 4 And he called her and said, ‘Aseneth, Aseneth’. 5 And she said, ‘Who is he that calls me, because the door of my chamber is closed, and the tower is high, and how then did he come into my chamber?’ 6 And the man called her a second time, ‘Aseneth, Aseneth’. 7 And she said, ‘Behold, (here) I (am), Lord. Who are you, tell me’. 8 And the man said, ‘I am the chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High. Rise and stand on your feet, and I will tell you what I have to say’ (14.1–8).

Aseneth is at once surprised and unsurprised at the appearance of the *Anthropos* in her chambers: surprised because of the frightening scene accompanying him, and unsurprised because apparently she has asked the Lord for just such an experience. For she states that ‘the Lord God listened to [her] prayer’ (v. 1). She is also wearing a ‘black tunic of

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*Honor of W.D. Davies* (SJLA 21; eds. R. Hamerton-Kelly et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 11–44 [23].

mourning', 'sackcloth' and 'ashes', indicating that she has been engaged in mourning practices even before the encounter (v. 12).

Having sought the divine encounter, Aseneth is about to behold the *Anthropos* in his heavenly glory. As the text continues:

And Aseneth raised her head and saw (εἶδε), and behold, (there was) a man in every respect similar to Joseph (πάντα ὅμοιος τῷ Ἰωσήφ), by the robe (στολή) and the crown (στεφάνω) and the royal staff (ράβδω τῇ βασιλικῇ), except that his face was like lightning (ὡς ἀστραπή), and his eyes like sunshine (ὡς φέγγος ἡλίου), and the hairs of his head like a flame of fire of a burning torch (ὡς φλόξ πυρὸς ὑπολαμπάδος καιομένης), and hands and feet like iron shining forth from a fire (ὥσπερ σίδηρος ἐκ πυρὸς ἀπολάμπων), and sparks shot forth (σπινθήρες ἀπεπήδων) from his hands and feet (14.9).

Even though the narrative mentions nothing of an ascent or out-of-body experience, this is clearly a pre-death encounter between human and divine (cf. v. 3). Unlike the experience of Enoch, for example, who ascends to heaven (2 *En.* 1–22), *Jos. Asen.* lacks a heavenly voyage. Yet it is no less of a mystical encounter. We learn already that the divider separating human space from divine can be passed through from either side. Here the divine has entered human space.

Furthermore, the term 'angel' is not used of the *Anthropos* himself, yet we can be sure he is of heavenly origin. The genitive preposition ἐκ in the phrase ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ should be taken in the locative sense, indicating the *Anthropos* is 'from heaven', and in the qualitative sense, indicating he is of a 'heavenly' nature (cf. §5.3.2.2.3). The description of him in v. 9 further depicts him in terms typically used of angelic and heavenly beings in antiquity (Dan 7.9; 10.6; 1 *En.* 71.1; 2 *En.* 1.4–5; Matt 28.3; 4Q405 23 ii; Ezek 1; Isa 6).<sup>14</sup>

Having fallen to her face in fear, Aseneth gathers the strength to stand (*Jos. Asen.* 14.10–11), at which point the heavenly *Anthropos* gives her specific instructions:

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (SNTSMS 95; Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 53–62, 77–90.

14.12 Proceed unhindered into your second chamber and put off your black tunic of mourning (τὸν χιτῶνα τὸν μελανὸν τοῦ πένθους), and the sackcloth (τὸν σάκκον) put off your waist, and shake off those ashes from your head (τὴν τέφραν ταύτην), and wash your face and your hands with living water (ῥδατι ζῶντι), and dress in a new linen robe (as yet) untouched and distinguished (στολὴν λινὴν καινὴν ἄθικτον καὶ ἐπίσημον) and gird your waist (with) the new twin girdle of your virginity (τὴν ζώνην τὴν καινὴν τὴν διπλὴν τῆς παρθενίας σου). 13 And come (back) to me, and I will tell you what I have to say (14.12–13).

By instructing Aseneth to change her clothes and wash her face and hands, the *Anthropos* clearly intends that she do more than cleanse herself from dirt. He is foreshadowing the transformation she will soon undergo upon becoming a member of God's people.

Washing in water was generally meant to clean oneself ritually (Exod 30.19; Lev 1.9, 13; 1QS iii 4, 9; iv 21). That Aseneth is to wash in ῥδατι ζῶντι, however, indicates her cleansing has taken on a heightened significance—a mystical 'empowerment' (cf. ῥδωρ ζῶν: Lev 14.5; Num 19.17). Her washing will not only entail purification but the reception of *life* as well. Interestingly, the *Anthropos* does not instruct Aseneth to wash her clothes, as is often the biblical procedure (Lev 14.8; 15.5–13; Num 8.7, 21), but to change them altogether, indicating already that *newness* will be a key feature in her experience.

Aseneth's new στολή is composed of 'new linen' (λινὴν καινὴν) which is as yet 'untouched' (ἄθικτον) and 'distinguished' (ἐπίσημον). The adjectives ἄθικτον and ἐπίσημον, as well as the reference to Aseneth's girdle τῆς παρθενίας ('of virginity'), testify to the cultic significance of her putting on the στολή. Philo employs the genitive τῆς παρθενίας in a similar manner, making the point that God is not the father of 'the virgin', who can fall from her pure state, but of 'virginity' itself—the perennial state which never changes (*Cher.* 51). The heavenly *Anthropos* is leading Aseneth out of her state of impurity and into one of absolute purity. She will become 'chaste virgin' (ἡ παρθένος ἀγνή, 15.4). Such purity is necessary at least in order for the interaction between the two to continue (see 14.13), but it is also preparing her for something much greater.

### 6.2.2 ASENETH'S SALVATION AND PROMISE OF TRANSFORMATION

Upon ushering Aseneth into a state of ritual purity, the *Anthropos* declares that she is now saved and promises her that she will *not* be the same from this moment forward:

15.4 θάρσει Ασενὲθ ἡ παρθένος ἀγνή. ἴδου γὰρ ἐγράφη τὸ ὄνομα σου ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῶν ζώντων ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς βίβλου πρῶτον πάντων ἐγράφη τὸ ὄνομά σου τῷ δακτύλῳ μου καὶ οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 5 ἴδου δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς σήμερον ἀνακαινισθήσῃ καὶ ἀναπλασθήσῃ καὶ ἀναζωοποιηθήσῃ καὶ φαγείς ἄρτον εὐλογημένον ζωῆς καὶ πιείς ποτήριον εὐλογημένον ἀθανασίας καὶ χρίσῃ χρίσματι εὐλογημένῳ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας.

15.4 Courage, Aseneth, chaste virgin. For behold, your name was written in the book of the living in heaven; in the beginning of the book, as the very first of all, your name was written by my finger, and it will not be erased forever. 5 Behold, from today, you will be renewed and formed anew and made alive again, and you will eat blessed bread of life, and drink a blessed cup of immortality, and anoint yourself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility (15.4–5).

First, the *Anthropos* has written Aseneth's name in the heavenly book 'with [his] own finger', placing it 'very first of all' in the book and among the most important of God's people (v. 4). There is an explicit link between her initial purification in 14.1–13 and her salvation and promise of transformation in 15.4–5. Second, the promise of v. 5 serves as a paradigm for Aseneth's experience as it unfolds in the remainder of the narrative. The language of this promise indicates that Aseneth will experience a *continued renewal from this day forward*.

#### 6.2.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE DIVINE IN ASENETH'S TRANSFORMATION

The transformation is both a divine and human process. This is evinced by the shift in verb tense from the first to the second part of the statement. The first part of the promise consists of three passive verbs, while the second consists of three active verbs. The first verb, ἀνακαινισθήσῃ, the future passive indicative of ἀνακαινίζω, conveys the

idea of passive, eschatological ‘newness’ (cf. LXX Isa 61.4). Aseneth has entered a continual process of renewal that is similar, for example, to that which Paul describes in Rom 12.2 and 2 Cor 4.16. Both *Jos. Asen.* and Paul describe the present and continual taking on of a radical newness.

In addition to being ‘renewed’, Aseneth learns she will be ‘formed anew’ (ἀναπλασθήσῃ). ἀναπλασθήσῃ is the future passive indicative of (ἀνα)πλάσσω and conveys the image of a potter shaping clay into a usable object. Aseneth is being refashioned entirely. In the LXX πλάσσω speaks to the creative work of God, who is called the πλάσας or πλάσσων (i.e. the ‘refashioning one’; Prov 24.12; Isa 27.11; Jer 10.16) and refers to God’s forming or fashioning work at creation (Gen 2.7, 8, 15, 19; Job 38.14; 2 Macc 7.23). The motif of creation lies behind the term in *Jos. Asen.* 15.5. Aseneth is being fashioned in such a way that she is undergoing an experience of *recreation*, though we do not yet know what shape this *recreation* and refashioning is to take.

Carrying on the motif of recreation is the term ἀναζωοποιηθήσῃ, the future passive indicative of (ἀνα)ζωοποιέω. The verb literally means to ‘make life’ or ‘make alive’. In a broad number of contexts, ζωοποιέω signifies the life-giving work of God (Corp. Herm. IX, 6; XI, 4, 17; XVI, 8; 2 Esdras 9.8; 19.6). Early Christians used the term in a soteriological context, sometimes as a polemic against things other than Christ or the Spirit that cannot ‘give life’ (1 Cor 15.22; Gal 3.21; cf. Jn 5.21; 6.63). Whereas Burchard takes ἀναζωοποιηθήσῃ as saying Aseneth shall be ‘made alive *again*’, it might be more accurate to understand this verb without the adverb ‘again’. The prefix ἀνα- certainly justifies understanding the action as occurring ‘again’, in the sense that it or something close to it has occurred in the past. The context, however, does not seem to indicate that Aseneth is being given something she has had possession of before. But it is a life of which she has only just begun to take possession. Aseneth has never truly been alive the way she will be

from this day forward. She has been ushered into the life of new creation, where she is now being renewed and reshaped by the hand of God.

#### 6.2.2.2 *ASENETH'S ROLE IN HER TRANSFORMATION*

The three passive verbs thus speak to the role of the divine in Aseneth's conversion and *recreation*, while the three active verbs speak to her own role in this process. As the *Anthropos* tells Aseneth, 'you will eat blessed bread of life, and drink a blessed cup of immortality, and anoint yourself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility'. The meaning of this so-called 'meal formula' is up for debate.<sup>15</sup> It is unclear whether this is an actual meal or just a metaphor for life as a member of God's people. It certainly seems that some sort of practice is intended here, in the sense that the reader is to implement this part of the story in real life. Whatever the case may be, however, the formula points to a process of change characterised as 'life', 'immortality' and 'incorruptibility'.

This formulaic promise entails three elements. Firstly, the *Anthropos* tells Aseneth she 'will eat the blessed bread of life' (φαγῆς ἄρτον εὐλογημένον ζωῆς), a motif which may allude to the biblical manna myth (see §6.2.4.1.1). In LXX Neh 9.15, for example, manna is called ἄρτος ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ; in Wis 16.20 it is called ἅπ' οὐρανοῦ; and in Exod 16.4 it is called ἄρτος οὐρανοῦ. Perhaps the most intriguing parallel to the motif is the famous 'bread of life' episode in Jn 6.31–5. Here Jesus offers a polemic against those who believe that, in the wilderness, when Moses gave Israel manna he actually gave them 'the bread of heaven' (τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, v. 31; cf. Exod 16.4).<sup>16</sup> He

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<sup>15</sup> The full meal formula appears in 8.5 and 16.16, while the bread and cup alone are found in 8.9; 19.5; 21.21. Chesnutt, 'Perceptions', 113–32; Burchard, 'Importance', 109–17.

<sup>16</sup> On the 'bread of life' in Jn 6, see e.g. Randall Chesnutt, 'Bread of Life in Joseph and Aseneth and in John 6', in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honor of Frank Pack* (ed. J.E. Priest; Malibu, Calif.: Pepperdine University, 1989), 1–16; K.G. Kuhn, 'The Lord's Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran', in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (eds. K. Stendahl and J.H. Charlesworth; New York: Crossroad, repr., 1992), 65–93 [76];

asserts that it is not Moses but the Father who gives ‘the bread of heaven’ and ‘bread of God’ (ἄρτος τοῦ θεοῦ) which ‘comes down from heaven and gives life to the world’ (vv. 32–3). In response to this tradition, Jesus declares authoritatively, ‘I am the bread of life’ (ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς, v. 35). Whatever one makes of Jesus’ statement, it is clear that he is speaking against a widespread tradition in which manna—Moses’ ἄρτος—was known as ‘bread of life’ and ‘bread of heaven’ (Exod 16.14, 20, 21, 31; Num 11.7–9). What is more, Jesus does not offer simply a *different* substance or food in the place of Moses’ manna, but he insists that he himself is that which, through ingestion, gives true life. *Jos. Asen.* is probably drawing on the same complex of traditions in which the heavenly bread is also equated with the life-giving presence of God.

Secondly, the *Anthropos* tells Aseneth she will drink the cup of ‘immortality’ (ἀθανασίας). The concept of ‘immortality’ was well known in antiquity. Greek circles understood ἀθανασία as a quality of the gods, who were widely known as ἀθάνατοι (Hom. *Od.* 1.1; *Il.* 1.240; Plato, *Rep.* 3.386d; *Phaedr.* 246a, 252c). ἀθανασία was also a quality of the human soul (ψυχή), and in Jewish thought it was a quality of the righteous in the World to Come (Wis 3.4; 15.3; 4 Macc 14.5). In *Jos. Asen.* 15.5 ἀθανασία appears to affect Aseneth inwardly, in her non-physical parts, where she is promised a share in the immortal existence of the immortal-divine realm.

Thirdly, ἀφθαρσία denotes ‘incorruptibility’. As opposed to ἀθανασία, which describes inward (*soulish* or spiritual) immunity to death, ἀφθαρσία refers to outward immunity to physical destruction and corruptibility. ἀφθαρσία is essentially the negation of the property of φθορά, or the susceptibility to ‘destruction’.

ἀφθαρσία may also carry the sense of no longer being susceptible to *moral* ruin. Behind this choice of terms is the idea that the physical

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Barnabas Lindars, “Joseph and Aseneth” and the Eucharist, in *Scripture: Meaning and Method* (ed. B.P. Thompson; Hull: Hull University, 1987), 181–99; Burchard, ‘Importance’, 263–95.

body is the seat of immorality, and conquering it leads one towards overcoming immoral actions. *Jos. Asen.* 15.5 therefore indicates that though Aseneth's body is naturally breakable and subject to decay and destruction, it 'shall be refashioned' (ἀναπλασθήσῃ) into an indestructible one and no longer susceptible to *physical* breakability. And having entered a state of perpetual 'virginity' (τῆς παρθενίας), Aseneth is no longer susceptible to moral failure. She is not just a 'virgin' who lives forever (ἀθανασία), but she is a refashioned being (ἀναπλασθήσῃ) invulnerable to ruin of all kinds.

#### 6.2.2.3 SUMMARY

As a new member of God's people, Aseneth will undergo a transformation 'from this day forward' such that she becomes perfected inside and out. Verse 5b moves from a broad perspective of Aseneth's new state, characterising it as the life of new creation, to a view specifically of the inward effects of her transformation. She is now taking on the inward state of divine-immortal beings and a body which is impervious to corruption. She is also apparently no longer susceptible to immorality, a quality stemming from the changes in her physical body. She is not merely a virgin but '*the* chaste virgin', having clothed herself with perpetual virginity. Though Aseneth has only just entered the life of new creation set forth in the promise, the heavenly *Anthropos* has set the stage for her to realise the fulness of this new life 'from this day forward'.

#### 6.2.3 ASENETH'S NAME CHANGE

Having set forth what is in store for Aseneth in the formula (*Jos. Asen.* 15.4–5), the heavenly *Anthropos* proceeds to give her a new name. This marks the first in a series of events in which Aseneth becomes changed from pagan woman to angel-like being, realising the fulness of the



promise given her. Like the inscription of her name in the heavenly book, Aseneth's name-change does not speak to the ontological change she is to undergo *in se*. However, it cannot be separated from her overall transformation. Picking up where we left off in ch. 15, we read:

15.6 Courage, Aseneth, chaste virgin (ἡ παρθένος ἄγνή). Behold, I have given you today to Joseph for a bride, and he himself will be your bridegroom for ever (and) ever. 7 And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge (πόλις καταφυγῆς), because in (ἐν) you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under (ὑπό) your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind (ἐν) your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves (οἱ προσκείμενοι) to the Most High God in the name of Repentance. For Repentance is in the heavens (ἡ μετάνοιά ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς), an exceedingly beautiful and good daughter of the Most High. And she herself entreats the Most High God for you at all times and for all who repent in the name of the Most High God, because he is (the) father of Repentance (τῆς μετανόιας). And she herself is guardian of all virgins, and loves you very much, and is beseeching the Most High for you at all times and for all who repent she prepared a place of rest in the heavens (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). And she will renew all who repent (ἀνακαινίζει πάντας τοὺς μετανοήσαντας), and wait on them herself for ever (and) ever. 8 And Repentance is exceedingly beautiful, a virgin pure (ἐστὶν ἡ μετάνοια καλὴ σφόδρα παρθένος καθαρὰ) and laughing always, and she is gentle and meek. And, therefore, the Most High Father loves her, and all the angels stand in awe of her. And I, too, love her exceedingly, because she is also my sister. And because she loves you virgins (τὰς παρθένους), I love you, too (15.6–8).

Aseneth's name is to become πόλις καταφυγῆς: City of Refuge (v. 7).

This name probably indicates that she is now *the* mediator and protector to those who seek the Lord. For she alone stands between 'many nations' (ἔθνη πολλά) and the Lord himself.

First, Aseneth's new name πόλις καταφυγῆς is based on the motif of Zion as the eschatological place of 'refuge' for those who repent. Zion had long been thought of as the place to which penitent sinners would someday come to seek refuge in the Lord (LXX Isa 1.26; 54.15; 55.5; Zech 2.15).<sup>17</sup> Like 'Zion, the faithful mother-city' (μητρόπολις πιστὴ Σιών, LXX Isa 1.26), Aseneth is the 'walled mother-city' (τετειχισμένη μητρόπολις, *Jos. Asen.* 16.16) for all who repent and attach themselves to

<sup>17</sup> Anthea E. Portier-Young, 'Sweet Mercy Metropolis: Interpreting Aseneth's Honeycomb', *JSP* 14.2 (2005): 133–57 [137–8]; Bohak, *Heliopolis*, 8–17.

the Lord (15.7). And like Zion and the Temple, Aseneth is now to mediate between those who repent and the Lord himself.

Second, in a fascinating literary tactic, *Jos. Asen.* posits a correspondence between Aseneth as πόλις καταφυγῆς and the one in heaven called Μετάνοια (v. 7). Aseneth serves as some sort of mediator on earth as Metanoia does in heaven.<sup>18</sup> Metanoia beseeches God in heaven on behalf of Israel (15.7–8), while Aseneth does the same on earth.<sup>19</sup>

Third, given the correlation between Aseneth's new clothing and the appearance of the heavenly *Anthropos*, she would appear to have begun to take on both a quasi-angelic state and a quasi-priestly role. Anointing was of course used of the initiation or setting apart of priests in ancient times (Exod 28.41; 29.7; 30.30; 40.13, 15; cf. 40.9, 10). It was also symbolic of the spiritual empowerment of the individual for service (1 Sam 10.1, 9; Zech 4.1–14). Along with her changing into new garments (cf. Exod 28.1–4), Aseneth's anointing with oil certainly seems to indicate something of a mediatorial commissioning, whereby she is commissioned and empowered for divine service.

Furthermore, a change of clothing was often an indication of a change in existence in ancient tales of mystical transformation.<sup>20</sup> Aseneth's experience is similar, for example, to that of Enoch in *2 En.* 22 (see §2.3.1.3.3).<sup>21</sup> As noted already, Enoch became changed into a being akin to the priestly angels around him and thereupon assumed the role of celestial priest.<sup>22</sup> Aseneth's change in clothes likewise seems crucial both to her vocational change and to her new ontological state of being.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 130–2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 137; Randall D. Chesnutt, 'The Social Setting and Purpose of Joseph and Aseneth', *JSP* 2 (1988): 21–48 [27].

<sup>20</sup> Morray-Jones, 'Mysticism', 12–14, 22–23, 27–28; Gooder, *Third Heaven?*, 51, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 40–4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 40, 44–6, 51–6.

<sup>23</sup> Humphrey, *Ladies*, 45; cf. Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 128–29.

Fourth, that Aseneth's chambers are depicted in terms of a temple-space is suggestive of the overall priestly ideas lying beneath the portrait the authors are attempting to paint.<sup>24</sup> One, they are divided into three parts, having outer (*Jos. Asen.* 2.3–5; 10.12–13), middle and an inner units (*Jos. Asen.* 15.14; 16.8, 10, 11). Two, they contain something like an altar, a specific place where worship occurs. Three, the 'exhalation' (ῆ πνοή) of the bread and wine Aseneth is giving the *Anthropos* 'will go up till heaven' (ἐλεύσεται ἕως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), much like the smoke of the incense and sacrifices offered in the Temple (*Jos. Asen.* 15.14; cf. *1 En.* 9.10; *3 Bar.* 11.1–9; *T. Adam* 1.10; *Rev* 8.4). Four, hanging outside the door to her chambers is a καταπέτασμα ('veil'), the term commonly used of the veil in the Temple (*Jos. Asen.* 10.2; cf. LXX *Exod* 26.31–37; *Lev* 16.2, 12–13, 15; *2 Chr* 3.14; *Mk* 15.38).<sup>25</sup> The καταπέτασμα would no doubt 'have had an immediate cultic connotation' to a Jewish reader of the period.<sup>26</sup>

And five, Aseneth's entry into a quasi-priestly role is finalised in her shared meal with the *Anthropos* (*Jos. Asen.* 16). As is well known, the Exodus generation was promised possession of the 'land flowing with milk and honey' (*Exod* 3.8, 17; *Num* 14.8).<sup>27</sup> By eating from the divine honey, Aseneth is taking part in this promise and is thereby delivered from her former way of life *in Egypt*. Anthea Portier-Young seems correct in suggesting that when the bees then construct the second honeycomb on her lips, the implication is that she herself has now become qualified to bestow God's *deliverance*, mercy and protection upon others.<sup>28</sup> While *Anthropos* never tells Aseneth, 'You are a priest of God', she does receive a commissioning to mediate between God and humankind.

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<sup>24</sup> Bohak, *Heliopolis*, 70–1; Andrea Lieber, 'I Set a Table before You: The Jewish Eschatological Character of Aseneth's Conversion Meal', *JSP* 14 (2004): 63–77 [67].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 119–20; Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 215 n. h; Bohak, *Heliopolis*, 70–2; Celia Deutsch, 'Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision and Transformation', in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism* (Ekstasis 2; eds. V.D. Arbel and A.A. Orlov; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 325–48 [328–9].

<sup>26</sup> Bohak, *Heliopolis*, 70; cf. Lieber, 'Table', 67.

<sup>27</sup> Portier-Young, 'Mercy', 147–53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–57.

Also not to be overlooked is the fact that the *Anthropos* accepts Aseneth's request to give him bread and wine from her own chambers. As the text reports:

15.14 And the man said to her, 'Speak (up)'. And Aseneth stretched out her right hand and put it on his knees and said to him, 'I beg you, Lord, sit down a little on this bed, because this bed is pure and undefiled (καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος), and a man or woman never sat on it. And I will set a table before you, and bring you bread and you will eat, and bring you from my storeroom old and good wine, the exhalation of which will go up till heaven (ἡ πνοὴ αὐτοῦ ἐλεύσεται ἕως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), and you will drink from it. And after this you will go out (on) your way'. 15 And the man said to her, 'Hurry and bring (it) quickly'.

16.1 And Aseneth hurried and set a new table (τράπεζαν καινήν) before him and went to provide bread for him. And the man said to her, 'Bring me also a honeycomb (κηρίον μελίσσης)' (15.14–16.1).

On a general level, the significance of the sharing of a meal between Aseneth and the *Anthropos* lies in the confusion of boundaries it symbolises. As Andrea Lieber points out, 'Food is a powerful symbol in *Joseph and Aseneth* in that it sharply defines the social boundaries that are so important to the text as a whole'.<sup>29</sup> Whereas Joseph, for example, refuses to eat with any Egyptians to avoid having relations with them (7.1), Aseneth eats with the *Anthropos* knowingly *to mix with his kind*.

#### 6.2.4 A MEAL OF *GASTRONOMICAL* SIGNIFICANCE

Aseneth's transformation therefore progresses much further when she and the heavenly *Anthropos* eat of the honeycomb (κηρίον μέλι), the heavenly food.<sup>30</sup> She has clearly crossed the social and ontological boundaries separating her kind from his. What shall now become plain is that Aseneth does not just merely enter a new social class, but she enters the new ontological state the *Anthropos* had earlier promised she would inherit. She can now eat the very 'food' angels eat in heaven.

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<sup>29</sup> Lieber, 'Table', 64.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 141–7.

#### 6.2.4.1 BRING ME ALSO A HONEYCOMB

The heavenly *Anthropos* has instructed Aseneth, ‘Bring me also a honeycomb’ (16.1). Aseneth does as she is told and unexpectedly finds a honeycomb in her storeroom (vv. 2–8). *Jos. Asen.* 16.8–11 offers an intriguing description of the honeycomb:

16.8 And Aseneth entered her storeroom and found a honeycomb (κηρίον μελίσσης) lying on the table. And the comb was big and white as snow and full of honey (μέγα καὶ λευκὸν ὥσεί χιῶν καὶ πλήρης μέλιτος). And that honey was like the dew from heaven and its exhalation like breath of life (ὥς δρόσος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἡ πνοὴ αὐτοῦ ὥς πνοὴ ζωῆς). 9 And Aseneth wondered and said in herself, Did then this comb come out of the man’s mouth, because its exhalation is like the breath of this man’s mouth (διότι ἡ πνοὴ αὐτοῦ ὥς πνοὴ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου ἐστίν)? 10 And Aseneth took that comb and brought it to the man, and put it on the table which she had prepared before him.

And the man said to her, ‘How is it that you said that a honeycomb is not in my storeroom? And behold, you have brought a wonderful honeycomb (κηρίον μελίσσης θαυμαστόν)’. 11 And Aseneth was afraid and said, ‘Lord, I did not have a honeycomb in my storeroom at any time, but you spoke and it came into being. Surely this came out of your mouth, because its exhalation is like breath of your mouth (διότι ἡ πνοὴ αὐτοῦ ὥς πνοὴ τοῦ στόματός σου ἐστίν)’.

After smiling at her in confirmation of her enlightenment (16.12–13), the *Anthropos* tells Aseneth:

Happy are you, Aseneth, because the ineffable mysteries (ἀπόρρητα μυστήρια) of the Most High have been revealed (ἀπεκαλύφθη) to you, and happy (are) all who attach themselves to the Lord God in repentance, because they will eat from this comb (μακάριοι πάντες οἱ προσκείμενοι κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ἐν μετανοίᾳ ὅτι ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κηρίου φάγονται). For this comb is (full of the) spirit of life (διότι τοῦτο τὸ κηρίον ἐστὶ πνεῦμα ζωῆς). And the bees of the paradise of delight (τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς) have made this from the dew of the roses of life that are in the paradise of God (ἐκ τῆς δρόσου τῶν ῥόδων τῆς ζωῆς τῶν ὄντων ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). And all the angels of God eat of it (οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐσθίουσι) and all the chosen of God and all the sons of the Most High, because this is a comb of life (ὅτι κηρίον ζωῆς ἐστὶ τοῦτο), and everyone who eats of it will not die for ever (and) ever (πᾶς ὃς ἂν φάγῃ ἐξ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀποθανεῖται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον, 16.14).

Much could be taken from the *Anthropos*’ statement. What is important is what it reveals specifically about the nature of the honeycomb. The honeycomb originates from the ‘paradise of God’; ‘all the angels of God eat

of it', and 'all the chosen of God' eat of it as well, because it is 'a comb of life'; and most importantly, 'everyone who eats of it will not die for ever (and) ever'.

Scholars have long sought to understand the nature of the honeycomb (and the bees). There are any number of interpretations of it, but only a few are of direct relevance for our purposes. Let us briefly discuss these before making our case as to its meaning below.

#### 6.2.4.1.1 THE HONEYCOMB IN *JOSEPH AND ASENETH* AND WISDOM TRADITIONS

Some scholars insist that the meaning of the honeycomb is to be found in Wisdom traditions. Ross Kraemer is among the more recent advocates of this view.<sup>31</sup> She argues that the honeycomb is a symbol of Wisdom on the grounds that it originates from the mouth of the *Anthropos* (*Jos. Asen.* 16.6–7), just as Wisdom comes from the mouth of God (*Prov* 2.6; *Sir.* 24.19). By eating the Wisdom, then, Aseneth herself becomes the embodiment of Wisdom, able to impart upon others divine teachings which now lead to salvation.

Certainly this view carries some weight. But it does not capture the true power the honeycomb possesses, most notably evinced in its role in Aseneth's transformation. The honeycomb does far more than Wisdom can do, as becomes clear shortly. Its significance is truly cosmic.

#### 6.2.4.1.2 VERGIL AND THE MYTH OF *BUGONIA*

That honey was thought of in terms of divine food finds ample attestation in Graeco-Roman antiquity as well. Vergil (70–19 B.C.E.) portrays honey as something that gives life to the dead (*Georg.* 4.149–52).<sup>32</sup> In Book 4 of

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<sup>31</sup> Ross Shepard Kraemer, 'Aseneth as Wisdom', in *Wisdom and Psalms* (FCBSS 2; eds. A. Brenner and C. Fontaine; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 218–39; cf. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 25–7.

<sup>32</sup> Portier-Young, 'Mercy', 143.

his *Georgica* (ca. 29 B.C.E.), he discusses the place of bees and beekeeping in the broader portrait of agriculture (*Georg.* 4.1–280). Bees are depicted as a model of humanity and the human being, both in their positive and negative attributes. Regarding the latter, like humans, bees experience sickness and death. Vergil points to the story of Aristaeus in prescribing what to do when one's entire swarm of bees dies (*Georg.* 4.281–314). Essentially, he describes a process called *bugonia*, in which bees are generated spontaneously from out of the carcass of a deceased ox (or a young bull). *Bugonia* was a widely held belief in Graeco-Roman antiquity (Ovid, *Fasti* 1; *Metam.* 15; Porphyry, *Antr. Nymph.* 8; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 11.23). Thus even if the composers of *Jos. Asen.* did not draw specifically on the work of Vergil, they would no doubt have been familiar with the myth of *bugonia*. Of Vergil's retelling of this myth and its relation to *Jos. Asen.*, Kraemer explains, 'The bees generated out of the decaying flesh (from which they flee in abhorrence) are understood to constitute the now-transformed life force (*anima*) of the dead animal'.<sup>33</sup>

The bees, presumably like those of *Jos. Asen.* 16, are symbolic of Aseneth's being restored to life from the dead. Just as in *Georgica*, the bees in *Jos. Asen.* pass through death before returning to life (vv. 12–16). Likewise, Aseneth has passed through death and is now experiencing true life, an experience which is nearing its apex in her ingestion of the divine honey, the very spiritual presence of God. Whatever the precise details of Vergil's account might mean, the graphic imagery of the decaying oxen certainly resemble the negative portrait of Aseneth before her conversion and transformation. She was as good as dead. But now, having met the heavenly *Anthropos*, encountered the bees, and eaten of the honeycomb, she has *officially* passed from death to life.<sup>34</sup> Thus not only is the honeycomb life-giving, but so are the bees. Both effect change in Aseneth

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<sup>33</sup> Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 169.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Rees Conrad Douglas, 'Liminality and Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth', *JSP* 3 (1988): 31–42.

which leads to her freedom from death and decay and obtainment of immortality and incorruptibility.

#### 6.2.4.1.3 THE HONEYCOMB, MANNA AND THE NEW CREATION

Others understand the honeycomb to have parallels to manna traditions of antiquity (see §6.2.2.2).<sup>35</sup> Such scholars generally point out that both the honeycomb and manna are white and taste like honey (Exod 16.31; *Jos. Asen.* 16.8); both are related to dew (Num 11.9; *Jos. Asen.* 16.14); both are thought to give life in some manner (*Jos. Asen.* 16.8); and both are related to traditions about food whose origins are heavenly.<sup>36</sup>

Moyer Hubbard offers a helpful assessment of this view. He contends that while the image of the honeycomb no doubt alludes to the manna of Exod 16, it is rather more than that.<sup>37</sup> As tradition goes, the Israelites were on the brink of starvation until this mysterious food-substance called 'manna' fell from the sky and sustained them. The depiction of the honeycomb in *Jos. Asen.* 16.8 is rather akin to that of manna in Exod 16.14, 31. Both are related to or described as 'dew' and both are white in appearance. However, Hubbard rightly observes that *Jos. Asen.* relies fully neither on Exodus nor on second-Exodus traditions.<sup>38</sup> He explains that 'the transformative, regenerative effects associated with the honey-cake of *Joseph and Aseneth* are difficult to derive from the Exodus narrative and this suggests that the background to this imagery

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<sup>35</sup> Christoph Burchard, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth: Überlieferung-Ortbestimmung* (WUNT 2.8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1965), 130–1; Victor Aptowitzer, 'Aseneth, the Wife of Joseph: A Haggadic Literary-Historical Survey', *HUCA* 1 (1924): 239–306 [282–3]; Marc Philonenko, 'Initiation et mystère dans Joseph et Asénath', in *Initiation: Contributions to the Theme of the Study-Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, 1964* (SHR 10; ed. C.J. Bleeker; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 147–53 [152–3].

<sup>36</sup> Portier-Young, 'Mercy', 141–2; Karl-Gustav Sandelin, 'A Wisdom Meal in the Romance of Joseph and Aseneth', in *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old Testament Theme, its Development Within Early Judaism and its Impact on Early Christianity* (ed. idem; Åbo, Sweden: Åbo Akademi, 1986), 151–7.

<sup>37</sup> Portier-Young, 'Mercy', 142–3.

<sup>38</sup> Moyer Hubbard, 'Honey for Aseneth: Interpreting a Religious Symbol', *JSP* 16 (1997): 97–110; idem, *Creation*, 66–73.



might be more complex than previously allowed'.<sup>39</sup> One would be wise, therefore, to seek perhaps another background against which to view the image of the honeycomb.

Hubbard maintains that this ancillary background may well be the motif of *new birth*. To eat of the honeycomb is thus to be born anew. He compares the honeycomb of *Jos. Asen.* with a similar episode in the *Epistle of Barnabas*. In Hubbard's analysis, *Barnabas* 6.8–7.2 'is the only extant ancient source which combines the peculiar renewal language of *Joseph and Aseneth* 8.9 and 15.5 (ἀνακαινίζω, ἀναπλάσσω, [ἀνα]ζωοποιέω) with a specific reference to the consumption of honey'.<sup>40</sup> The text in *Barnabas* is indeed telling, and Hubbard makes a good case for comparing it with *Jos. Asen.* Hubbard explains:

In interpreting the meaning of 'a land flowing with milk and honey', the author comments: 'Since he has made us new (ἀνακαινίσας ἡμᾶς) by the remission of sins, he has made us another sort [of person], as though we had the souls of children, indeed, as though he were creating us afresh' (ἀναπλάσσοντος οὐτοῦ ἡμᾶς; 6.11).<sup>41</sup>

*Barnabas* goes on to discuss further elements about the new creation as prophesied in Ezek 36 and then to add that honey makes an infant alive (ζωοποιέω; 6.17). He makes a link between new birth as contained in the image of honeycomb and new creation as associated in many instances with the image of new birth (see e.g. Tit 3.5; Philo, *Virt.* 130; 2 Macc 7.28).<sup>42</sup>

Hubbard concludes that the honeycomb in *Jos. Asen.* should not only be understood as a resignification of the manna tradition, but of the new birth and new creation motif as well. To eat of the honeycomb is to partake in new life and thus to become a newly created, progressively-regenerating being.<sup>43</sup> *Jos. Asen.* portrays conversion both in terms of a

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<sup>39</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 67–8.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–9

‘realized soteriology’ and even as a ‘realized eschatology’, though the latter is less certain than the former.<sup>44</sup> By converting to Judaism, one is not only saved, but also partakes in the life of immortality and incorruptibility.<sup>45</sup> Hubbard rightly cites Burchard’s insightful remark that although the phrase ‘new creation’ itself is absent from *Jos. Asen.*, ‘it seems to be an appropriate term to cover the fundamental transformation both spiritual and physical which is ascribed to Aseneth in a variety of ways’.<sup>46</sup> And according to *Jos. Asen.*, this experience comes through conversion to Judaism.<sup>47</sup> It is precisely this experience which is on vivid display in Aseneth’s conversion, and those who follow her example will likewise share in it.

#### 6.2.4.2 THE HONEYCOMB AS THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Aseneth immediately recognises the divine nature of the honeycomb (cf. Philo, *Det.* 117; *Fug.* 138). First, it is the same as ‘the blessed bread of life’ the *Anthropos* promised her in 15.5. For after the two partake of the honeycomb, the *Anthropos* tells her, ‘Behold, you have eaten the bread of life’ (16.16).<sup>48</sup> Whereas Aseneth has been changing since the *Anthropos* originally appeared in ch. 14, the shared meal marks the moment she begins truly to understand that she has entered new life.<sup>49</sup>

Second, the honeycomb is more than bread *from* the divine realm. It is the very presence of God. According to 16.16, the honeycomb *is* the bread of life of 15.5. And we learn in 16.14: διότι τοῦτο τὸ κηρίον ἐστὶ

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 73. But see Burchard, ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, 192 n. 79.

<sup>45</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 73.

<sup>46</sup> Christoph Burchard, ‘The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and a Fresh Look at the Lord’s Supper’, *NTS* 33 (1987): 102–34 [108]; Hubbard, *Creation*, 74.

<sup>47</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 75; cf. Burchard, ‘Importance’, 108; Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, 59–61.

<sup>48</sup> Portier-Young, ‘Mercy’, 138–9.

<sup>49</sup> Manna, as well as dew, was thought by ancient Jews to have tasted like honey. See *Tg. Ps-J*, *Tg. Neof* and *Tg. Onq.* to Exod 16.31; cf. Chesnutt, ‘Setting’, 27; idem, ‘Perceptions’, 117–8; Lieber, ‘Table’, 64–8.

πνεῦμα ζωῆς. The wording of the Greek here presents the interpreter with a difficult decision. It literally reads, 'For this comb is the spirit of life'. Should we render this literally and be forced to understand the honeycomb itself as the spirit of life? Or is there a way around this difficult concept?

Burchard opts for the latter option, translating the line to read, 'For this comb is (full of the) spirit of life'. He regards the honeycomb not as itself the presence of God but as being *full of* the presence of God. To eat the honeycomb is not then to eat God's presence, but only something which contains it. Yet a literal reading of the remark might make better sense. If we render this to read, 'For this comb *is* the spirit of life', we would then be led to believe that the honeycomb is actually the presence of God. This interpretation allows us to overcome the ambiguity of the Greek without altering it in any way. It also makes good sense in the light of the broader historical tradition concerning the mystical ingestion of God's presence, which we address shortly below.

#### 6.2.4.3 THE 'NOURISHMENT MOTIF'

Our understanding of God's presence in *Jos. Asen.* as an ingesta aligns with an ancient Jewish tradition known among scholars as the 'nourishment motif'.<sup>50</sup> Let us spend a moment discussing this motif. For it is important to our understanding of both *Jos. Asen.* and Rabbinic Judaism in the next chapter.<sup>51</sup>

Ira Chernus, who provides the most in depth investigation of this motif as it appears in rabbinic lore, insists that the experience of ingesting God's 'splendour' and being nourished by it is among the culminating

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<sup>50</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 74–87; cf. Andrea Lieber, 'Jewish and Christian Heavenly Meal Traditions', in *Paradise Now*, 313–39

<sup>51</sup> See the brief comparison of the motif with *Jos. Asen.* by Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 2.94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 66–7.

events of the ancient Jewish mystical experience far back in antiquity.<sup>52</sup>

While his focus is on the motif in the rabbinic period, it no doubt has antecedents at least as old as the Second Temple period.

Proprietors of the motif owe many of their chief ideas to the Moses-Sinai tradition, in which Moses is said to have survived forty days and nights on Sinai before God without food and drink. Instead of surviving on food and drink, Moses and company are said to have ‘beheld God and ate and drank’ (Exod 24.11).<sup>53</sup> God’s radiance was understood as having become sustenance to them, just as it is for the angels in heaven and just as it will be for the righteous in the World to Come (see §7.3.2.2).

It is well known that God’s face was the subject of mystical speculation in the Second Temple period.<sup>54</sup> However, we find very specific reference to the divine face as an entity which transforms and nourishes those who behold it. A notable example of the motif from the Second Temple period can be found in Philo. In his *QE* 2.39 he explains, ‘But this vision is the food of the soul and true partaking is the cause of a life of immortality. Wherefore it is said indeed “they ate and drank”’ (citing Exod 24.11).<sup>55</sup> Quite like Aseneth, who becomes immortal by eating the divine presence (*Jos. Asen.* 15.5), Philo describes an experience of *ingesting God through the eyes/mind* which leads to immortality.<sup>56</sup>

Two of the requisite elements constituting the nourishment motif can be found in *Jos. Asen.* as well. One comes in 16.14, where we read simply, ‘All the angels of God eat of [the honeycomb]’ (οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐσθίουσι). The honeycomb—the ‘bread of life’ of 15.5—is thus identified with the food the angels eat in heaven. But the more important requisite element lies in the ambiguous wording of the Greek:

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<sup>52</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 74–87; Lieber, ‘Traditions’, 313–39.

<sup>53</sup> MT: וַיֵּשְׁתּוּ וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִפָּנֵי הַיְיָ; LXX: καὶ ὠφθησαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἔπιον.

<sup>54</sup> Andrei A. Orlov, ‘God’s Face in the Enochic Tradition’, in *Paradise Now*, 179–93.

<sup>55</sup> English translation of Philo’s *QE* is that of Ralph Marcus, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: HUP, 1953), 82.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Deutsch, ‘Therapeutae’, 287–312; eadem, ‘Task’, 83–104.

διότι τοῦτο τὸ κηρίον ἐστὶ πνεῦμα ζωῆς. Logically if the bread and honeycomb *are* the Spirit of Life, then those who ingest it, including the angels in heaven (16.14), the heavenly *Anthropos* and the transforming Aseneth, are assumed to be ingesting some aspect of the divine being. They literally eat the Spirit of Life. That which Aseneth ingests when she eats the honeycomb, and that which is the source of her transformation, is therefore not food or drink but literally *the spiritual presence of God*.<sup>57</sup>

The shared meal confirms Aseneth's transformation into a celestial being and union with the celestial world (cf. 16.14). She has now become like and entered the ranks of the heavenly host. Lieber once again offers helpful analysis, in this case concerning the significance of the shared meal:

The image of the sacred meal shared among angels symbolizes the transformative nature of the divine-human encounter. Feasting with the angels, the righteous assimilate the angelic qualities of blessedness and eternal life. So, Aseneth's encounter with the heavenly *anthropos* at the culmination of her conversion process is depicted as a meal which physically transforms her very being. Her conversion is not merely a *metanoia*, a change of mind, but a radical transformation of her ontic condition. Indeed, it appears that Aseneth in her conversion is herself transformed into an angelic object of vision, and perhaps eternal nourishment.<sup>58</sup>

The fact that Aseneth is eating the same food as the angels is thus not only suggestive of her new social status, but it is the major clue as to the nature of her new ontological condition. Ross Kraemer puts it nicely, remarking that the ingestion of the angelic food 'conveys angelic essence and immortality on Aseneth'.<sup>59</sup> One might say that Aseneth *is what she eats*.

#### 6.2.5 ASENETH RADIANTLY TRANSFORMED

Up to this point, Aseneth has only begun to realise what is taking place in and upon her. What the *Anthropos* promised would happen is happening.

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<sup>57</sup> Chesnutt, 'Perceptions', 118.

<sup>58</sup> Lieber, 'Table', 76–7.

<sup>59</sup> Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 137.

What remains is that she sees her transformation outwardly. This will come finally and instantaneously during the *Anthropos*' departure from her chambers and return to heaven (*Jos. Asen.* 17.7–10).

As the *Anthropos* departs her presence riding into heaven on 'something like a chariot of four horses', Aseneth comes to the full realisation that she has been in the presence of a divine being (17.10). This causes her great distress, a condition apparently made worse by the already feeble state she is in due to the weeping, affliction and fast she has endured (18.1–4). She also realises she has yet to do what the heavenly *Anthropos* initially instructed her to do: to change fully into her wedding clothes (18.5). 'And she hurried and entered her second chamber where the chests (containing) her ornaments were', we are told, 'and opened her big coffer and brought out her first robe, (the one) of wedding, like lightning in appearance (ὡς ἀστραπήν τῷ εἶδει), and dressed in it (18.5). She goes on to decorate herself in a golden crown and precious jewellery (18.5–6), again remembering that she has forgotten another of the instructions given her: to wash her face in water (18.7–8; cf. ShT 287–8; HZ 418–19).

She thus sends her foster-sister to bring her water and proceeds to wash her face, at which point she finds that her appearance has changed dramatically:

18.9 And Aseneth leaned (over) to wash her face and saw her face in the water. And it was like the sun (ἦν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος) and her eyes (were) like a rising morning star (οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῆς ὡς ἑωσφόρος ἀνατέλλων), and her cheeks like fields of the Most High (αἱ παρειαὶ αὐτῆς ὡς ἄρουραι τοῦ ὑψίστου), and on her cheeks (there was) red (color) like a son of man's blood, and her lips (were) like a rose of life coming out of its foliage, and her teeth like fighting men lined up for a fight, and the hair of her head (was) like a vine in the paradise of God (ὡς ἄμπελος ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ) prospering in its fruits, and her neck like an all-variegated cypress, and her breasts (were) like the mountains of the Most High God' (*Jos. Asen.* 18.9).

The outward effects of Aseneth's transformation are on display here in 18.9 even more than in 16.12–16, as she has become radiant like the angels. The wedding robe she puts on is 'like lightning in appearance'

(ὥς ἀστραπὴν τῷ εἶδει), an image commonly used of angels and divine beings (Dan 7.9; 10.6; 1 En. 71.1; 2 En. 1.4–5; Matt 28.3). And her face now radiates ‘like the sun’ (ἦν ὥς ὁ ἥλιος) and her eyes ‘like a morning star’ (οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῆς ὥς ἑωσφόρος ἀνατέλλων). Interestingly, these images are also used of the heavenly *Anthropos* in 14.1–2, 9, and again of Aseneth in 18.5, 9. Both Aseneth and the *Anthropos* wear a ‘robe’ and ‘crown’, both are said to be ‘like lightning’ in some way, and both radiate like the sun and other cosmic elements.

Lastly, Aseneth’s foster-father’s response gives further insight into the nature of Aseneth’s changed ontological state.<sup>60</sup> When he returns, he sees her, is immediately ‘alarmed’, stands ‘speechless for a long (time)’, is ‘filled with great fear’ and then falls ‘at her feet’ (18.11). He then remarks, ‘What is this, my mistress, and what is this great and wonderful beauty (ἡ καλλονὴ αὕτη ἡ μεγάλη καὶ θαυμαστή)? At last the Lord God of heaven has chosen you as a bride for his firstborn son, Joseph’ (18.11). His response is in fact similar to Aseneth’s when she encounters the heavenly *Anthropos* in 14.10–11 (cf. Tob 12.11–22).<sup>61</sup> She has come to resemble the angels so much so that her foster-father cannot but react as if in the presence of a divine or angelic being.

The same language is used of Aseneth later in the narrative, just after Joseph arrives, but just before the wedding takes place. Like her foster-father, Aseneth’s family sees her and recognises the glorious transformation she has undergone:

20.6 And they [Aseneth’s family] saw Aseneth like (the) appearance of light (ὥς εἶδος φωτός), and her beauty was like heavenly beauty (ἦν τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς ὥς κάλλος οὐράνιον). And they saw her sitting with Joseph dressed in a wedding garment (ἔνδυμα γάμου). 7 And they were amazed at her beauty and rejoiced and gave glory to God who gives life to the dead.<sup>62</sup> 8 And after this they ate and drank and celebrated (20.6–8).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Kraemer, *Aseneth*, 101–4.

<sup>61</sup> Brooke, ‘Men and Women’, 168.

<sup>62</sup> This line echoes Blessing 2 (גְּבוּרָה) of the Amidah, where the congregants declare, ‘Blessed are you O Lord who revives the dead’ (ברוך אתה יהוה מחיה המתים).

Here again Aseneth radiates with angelic brightness. Her beauty is indeed 'like heavenly beauty' (ὡς κάλλος οὐράνιον).

What *Jos. Asen.* attempts to do is to show a correlation between the *Anthropos* and Joseph, between Aseneth and the *Anthropos*, and then between Aseneth and Joseph. At the heart of the narrative is thus a blurring or crossing of ontological lines.<sup>63</sup> The *Anthropos* and Joseph are already divine or heavenly from their initial appearance in the story, but only after converting and going through the process of transformation does Aseneth join their ranks and become like them.

#### 6.2.6 ASENETH'S TRANSFORMATION AND THE NEW CREATION

The importance of Aseneth's experience does not end with her own transformation. It has truly cosmic significance. Among the more important themes threading the narrative together is that of the new creation. As we suggested above, this seems to have been one of two principal reasons motivating the composition of *Jos. Asen.* Having made our way through Aseneth's experience of transformation, we should now discuss the implications of Aseneth's transformation as it relates to the new creation.

##### 6.2.6.1 SCHOLARSHIP ON ASENETH AND THE NEW CREATION

In his consideration of the ontological-anthropological nature of the 'new creation' in Paul, Peter Stuhlmacher thought it valuable to view Paul in the light of *Jos. Asen.* He believed the work provided evidence for the view that Paul's contemporaries understood the Spirit in terms of a material entity. But it is not just any material. It is *edible*.<sup>64</sup> And it is this edible Spirit which Stuhlmacher sees as the cause of Aseneth's transformation

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 1–8, 47–8.

<sup>64</sup> Stuhlmacher, 'Erwägungen', 18–35.



into what he calls a ‘geistlich-ontisch Neuerschaffung’.<sup>65</sup> Volker Rabens has recently challenged the material view of the Spirit, arguing that whatever we think we can actually know from *Jos. Asen.* must be considered in the light of the fact that the work ‘does not work with a systematic reflection of the (physical) nature of the honeycomb or of the Spirit’.<sup>66</sup> Certainly support for a material understanding of the Spirit is difficult to find in *Jos. Asen.* But seeing its ontological-transformative nature without question merits serious consideration.

More recently, Moyer Hubbard has examined the motif of new creation in *Jos. Asen.*<sup>67</sup> His basic premise is that the work portrays Aseneth’s conversion—the crux of the work—as an experience of new creation.<sup>68</sup> He argues that conversion is ‘*a completely transforming event, whose defining feature is newness*’, and maintains that the entire conversion episode is pregnant with the language of new creation.<sup>69</sup>

As noted already, Aseneth’s conversion spans chs. 8–21. In Hubbard’s view, *Jos. Asen.* 8.9 ‘introduces the heart of the conversion cycle which, in turn, emanates centrifugally from this text’.<sup>70</sup> This verse is thus a microcosm of the work’s portrait of conversion.

Firstly, in part *a* of the verse, Joseph offers a prayer to the Lord, praising him as the one ‘who gave life (ὁ ζωοποιήσας) to everything’—literally to ‘all’ (τὰ πάντα)—and ‘called them from darkness to light, from error to truth, from death to life’. Hubbard observes that ‘calling’ and ‘giving life’ are biblical expressions of creation and re-creation.<sup>71</sup> And the images of darkness-light, error-truth and death-life are widely attested ‘soteriological metaphors’ from Jewish antiquity.<sup>72</sup>

Secondly, in part *b* of the verse, Joseph then beseeches the Lord to:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 18–19; cf. Horn, *Angeld*, 170. Contra Rabens, *Spirit*, 54–67.

<sup>66</sup> Rabens, *Spirit*, 59.

<sup>67</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 54–76; cf. Burchard, ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, 191–3; Chesnutt, *Death*, 118–50.

<sup>68</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 73, 75.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 64, italics in original.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 60–3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 61.

bless this virgin (εὐλόγησον τὴν παρθένον ταύτην),  
 and renew her by your spirit (ἀνακαίνισον αὐτὴν τῷ πνεύματί σου),  
 and form her anew (ἀναπλάσσον) by your hidden hand,  
 and make her alive again by your life (ἀναζωοποιήσον αὐτὴν τῇ ζωῇ σου),  
 and let her eat your bread of life (φαγέτω ἄρτον ζωῆς σου),  
 and drink your cup of blessing (πίετω ποτήριον εὐλογίας σου),  
 and number her among your people  
 that you have chosen before all (things) came into being,  
 and let her enter your rest  
 which you have prepared for your chosen ones  
 and live in your eternal life (ζησάτω ἐν τῇ αἰωνίῳ ζωῇ σου) for ever and  
 ever.<sup>73</sup>

Hubbard makes several interesting observations on this text in claiming that its principal concern lies in the conversion-creation motif. First, he discusses the key terms in the threefold meal formula—ἀνακαίνιζω, ἀναπλάσσω, ἀναζωοποιέω. Each carries the image of newness, as is made plain in the prefix ἀνα- ('anew'). When we view these in the context of the broader conversion episode, the idea that conversion is also an experience of new creation and thus something of a 'realized soteriology' becomes quite clear.<sup>74</sup>

Second, the honeycomb that Aseneth eats in ch. 16 is perhaps the linchpin to Hubbard's argument.<sup>75</sup> We noted above that Hubbard understands the honeycomb not merely in terms of Exodus-manna traditions but in terms of the motif of new creation (see §6.2.4.1.1). To partake of the honeycomb is not just to partake in some new exodus. It is to enter the new creation state of existence.

Third, Hubbard correctly points out that new creation via conversion is only for those who, like Aseneth, are Gentiles.<sup>76</sup> This begs the question, if Gentiles are in need of spiritual and physical change in order to enter the ranks of God's people, what does this tell us about those who are *natural* Jews? Are Jews, presumably, already *immortal*,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 65–76.

<sup>76</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 75; cf. Burchard, 'Importance', 108; idem, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 192.

*incorruptible and intrinsically angel-like?* We shall entertain possible answers to this and other questions shortly below.

#### 6.2.6.2 *ASENETH AND THE MYTH OF ADAM AND EVE*

Let us now turn to an analysis of *Jos. Asen.* 16.16. This passage elaborates on the effects of Aseneth's transformation stemming from her ingestion of the divine. Having taken part in the honeycomb, Aseneth now receives word as to what will soon happen as a result. The *Anthropos* declares:

Behold, from today your flesh (will) flourish like flowers of life from the ground of the Most High (ὥς ἄνθη ζωῆς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τοῦ ὑψίστου), and your bones will grow strong like the cedars of the paradise of delight of God (ὥς αἱ κέδροι τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς τοῦ θεοῦ), and untiring powers will embrace you (δυνάμεις ἀκάματοι περισχήσουσί σε), and your youth will not see old age (ἡ νεότης σου γῆρας οὐκ ὀψεται), and your beauty will not fail for ever (τὸ κάλλος σου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα οὐκ ἐκλείψει). And you shall be like a walled mother-city (ὥς μητρόπολις τετειχισμένη) of all who take refuge with the name of the Lord God, the king of the ages' (*Jos. Asen.* 16.16).

The importance of the images in this verse lies in the collective portrait they create. They express a radically changed, immortal being who serves as mediator and protector to those who seek the Lord. Two of the three similes and the corresponding prepositional phrases shed light on the ontological aspect of Aseneth's transformation, specifically the source and nature of the substance out of which she is now *made*. In the first of these, Aseneth's flesh is said to flourish 'like the flowers of life from the ground of the Most High'. The conjunction ὥς indicates that the first item is becoming 'like' something else, though the conjunction itself does not tell us *in what sense* the two are comparable. However, the genitival phrase 'from the ground (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς) of the Most High' may be a reference both to the place from which Aseneth's new flesh comes and to its nature. The genitive thus carries a locative and qualitative sense, as it does elsewhere in *Jos. Asen.* (e.g. 14.3).

The phrase ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς is an appeal to the myth of Adam's creation in LXX Gen 2.7–8, where it also carries a double meaning. We

have already suggested that the creation myth lies behind much of the language of Aseneth's transformation in *Jos. Asen.* 14–17. Now we can see clearly that, just as Adam was created 'from the dust of the earth' (χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς) and thus shared in the 'dusty' substance of the earth (LXX Gen 2.7), so now Aseneth is being 'refashioned' (ἀναπλασθήσῃ, 15.5) out of the 'ground of the Most High' (16.16) and thus, presumably, shares in its ontological composition.

When we place our reading of this first simile in 16.16 and its prepositional phrase alongside that of the second, where it is said that Aseneth's bones will grow strong 'like the cedars of the paradise of delight of God' (ὥς αἱ κέδροι τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς τοῦ θεοῦ), we cannot but link this episode to the Eden narrative of Gen 2. Indeed, there is a clear allusion in *Jos. Asen.* 15–16 to the paradise (παράδεισος) myth of LXX Gen 2.8, where God is said to have planted a 'paradise in Eden', placed Adam in it and 'shaped' (ἐπλασεν) him from its dust (vv. 7, 8, 15).

*Jos. Asen.* 14–16 are clearly positing a *reversal* of the myth of Adam and Eve.<sup>77</sup> LXX Gen 2.7–8 reports that God 'shaped' Adam out of 'dust' (χοῦς) he had taken 'from the earth' (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς) and placed him in the paradise of Eden. In *Jos. Asen.*, however, Aseneth is being 'refashioned' (ἀναπλασθήσῃ, 15.5) 'from the earth' (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς) of the paradise 'of God' (τοῦ θεοῦ, 16.16), becoming immortal and incorruptible. Aseneth is no longer comprised of the substance characterising Adam in his dust-based state of being. She is instead remade from a substance 'like' (ὥς) that of which God and his realm are made.

#### 6.2.6.2.1 JOSEPH AND ASENETH AND PAUL

*Jos. Asen.*'s reversal of the myth of Adam and Eve closely resembles that of Paul in Rom 5.12–21 and in 1 Cor 15.44–9. In Rom 5 Paul contrasts Adam and the results of his sin with Christ and the results of his redemptive

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hubbard, *Creation*, 65–6.

work. Adam brought death, he exclaims, but Christ brings life. In 1 Cor 15 Paul makes a more explicit contrast between the ontological state of Adam and that of Christ, quoting LXX Gen 2.7 to make his point:

15.44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’ (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, cf. Gen 2.7); the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν). 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust (ἐκ γῆς χοῖκος); the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, 1 Cor 15.44–8).

Both Paul and *Jos. Asen.* make a claim about the ontological state of the people of God. Paul describes them as ‘pneumatic’ (1 Cor 15.44) and ‘heavenly’ (v. 48), while *Jos. Asen.* describes them as ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς of the παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ (16.16)—literally ‘from the ground of the paradise of God’. Both Paul and *Jos. Asen.* employ the same two terms—ἀθανασία and ἀφθαρσία—to describe the inner and outer state of God’s people (*Jos. Asen.* 14.3; 1 Cor 15.53). And both Paul and *Jos. Asen.* redeploy the myth of Adam and Eve in their respective formulations of the people of God. They differ primarily in that Paul reinterprets the myth through the Christ story, and *Jos. Asen.* through that of Aseneth.

#### 6.2.6.2.2 THE HONEYCOMB AND THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Furthermore, that the honeycomb is the Spirit of Life has direct implications for *Jos. Asen.*’s reversal of the myth of Adam and Eve. We know that after shaping Adam out of the ground, God ‘breathed’ (ἐνεφύσησεν) into Adam’s face the ‘breath of life’ (πνοὴν ζωῆς), making him a ‘living soul’ (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, 2.7). *Jos. Asen.* similarly calls the honeycomb: ‘spirit of life’.<sup>78</sup> By eating the honeycomb, Aseneth actually ingests the Spirit of Life (so 16.14). Thus instead of eating some type of

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<sup>78</sup> Hubbard, *Creation*, 63–9.

forbidden fruit, bringing death upon humankind, Aseneth does as she is told and takes God's pneumatic presence into her body, receiving life eternal.

#### 6.2.6.2.3 EVE, THE FRUIT AND THE VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

Additionally, it will be informative to note that LXX Gen 3.5–6 associates Eve's 'eating' of the fruit with visionary and contemplative activity. As the story goes, the Serpent tries to convince Adam and Eve that by eating the fruit they will be able to see and have insight 'like the gods' (ὡς θεοί). He tells them, 'your eyes will be opened' (διανοιχθήσονται ὑμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί) and 'you will be as gods, knowing (ὡς θεοί γινώσκοντες) good and evil' (LXX Gen 3.5, my trans.). How the LXX depicts Eve's reaction is particularly interesting: 'And the woman beheld (εἶδεν) that the tree was good for food and that (it is) pleasing to the eyes to behold (ἀρεστόν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰδεῖν) and beautiful for contemplating' (ὡραῖόν ἐστιν τοῦ κατανῶσαι, v. 6, my trans.). Albeit with negative implications, eating the fruit gave Eve godlike visionary and contemplative abilities.

*Jos. Asen.* likewise depicts Aseneth's ingestion of the Spirit of Life as affecting her visionary capabilities. The apparatus by which she ingests the Spirit of Life is not her mouth but her vision and intellect (16.12–14). Like Adam and Eve, who receive vision and intellect upon eating the fruit, Aseneth does so upon ingesting the Spirit of Life. The difference, however, is that Aseneth's is a positive experience, while that of Adam and Eve is negative.

#### 6.2.6.2.4 EATING FROM GOD AND BECOMING LIKE THE GODS

Lastly and importantly, it would be easy to point to some of the syntactic ambiguities in the text of LXX Gen 3.5–6 as influencing *Jos. Asen.* 15–16.

When the Serpent begins to speak, for example, he insists that disobeying God will not fact lead to death. In LXX Gen 3.5 he states literally:

ἦδει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐν ἧ ἡμέρᾳ φάγητε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ διανοιχθήσονται ὕμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί καὶ ἔσεσθε ὡς θεοί.

The pronoun αὐτοῦ—the genitive masculine or neuter of αὐτός—likely refers to the ‘tree’ (ξύλον, v. 2) and/or the ‘fruit’ (καρπός, v. 3). However, one would be justified to take God himself as its referent. Thus the composers of *Jos. Asen.* may well have understood the text as saying:

For *God* (ὁ θεός) knows that on whatever day you eat *from him*<sup>79</sup> (φάγητε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ) your eyes will be opened and you shall be as gods.

While there may not be exegesis in the proper sense being done in the text of *Jos. Asen.* 15–16, its composers would almost certainly have been aware of the ambiguities of the Greek of LXX Gen 3.5. Given the striking overlap between LXX Gen 2–3 and *Jos. Asen.* 15–16, and from what we know about the role of the divine ingestion motif in this portion of *Jos. Asen.*, to suggest its composers may have seen LXX Gen 3.5 in such a manner becomes more or less inescapable.

#### 6.2.6.3 SUMMARY

In summary, God is refashioning Aseneth out of a divine substance that makes her impervious to the curses sustained by humanity at the Fall. She is no longer subject to the ills of time, neither inwardly nor outwardly, for she is now immortal and incorruptible (15.5; 16.16). She will never lose her great beauty due to old age (16.16). And she now has the ability to understand mysteries otherwise unintelligible to humanity (16.12–14). In all of this, it would appear, *Jos. Asen.* is reversing the myth of Adam and

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<sup>79</sup> Not ‘it’ (i.e. the tree).

Eve, using Aseneth as the chief protagonist and the prototype of all who abandon their sinful ways and pledge allegiance to the God of Israel.<sup>80</sup>

#### 6.2.7 THE ONTOLOGICAL STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

If Aseneth shares in such a radical experience upon converting to Judaism, what might be the narrative's view of the ontological state of the Jewish people themselves? In his insightful study of *Jos. Asen.*, Randall Chesnutt argues that while Aseneth is the prototype of those who convert to Judaism, the transformation she undergoes does not extend to others.<sup>81</sup> The mystical-transformative element of her conversion is merely confirmation of her conversion and a motivation for others to follow her lead. Her 'epiphanic experience', as Chesnutt calls it, 'does not *constitute* her conversion but functions to *confirm* a conversion that has already taken place'.<sup>82</sup> It follows in his thinking that there

is no suggestion that subsequent converts need such epiphanic confirmation or should expect an angelic revelation, a dramatic physical transformation, or the other supernatural phenomena experienced by Aseneth. *The story of Aseneth itself* supplies the needed revelation and confirmation for future converts.<sup>83</sup>

He then summarises that

it is extremely doubtful that we should extrapolate from the very special and prototypical case of Aseneth a pattern of Jewish conversion in which an epiphanic or revelatory experience results in a visible physical transformation.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Philonenko, *Joseph et Asénath*, 55; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 214; Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 214.

<sup>81</sup> Chesnutt, *Death*, 136–7; cf. George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 261; Christoph Burchard, 'Der jüdische Asenethroman und seine Nachwirkung', in *ANRW* II.20.1.543–667 [655–6].

<sup>82</sup> Chesnutt, *Death*, 137, italics original.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., italics original.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



Certainly Chesnutt's point demands consideration. However, when Chesnutt distinguishes between that which 'constitutes' and that which 'confirms' a conversion, he seems to underestimate the 'prototypical' nature of Aseneth's conversion, even though he himself calls it this.<sup>85</sup> Thus while he sees Aseneth's conversion as 'prototypical', he does not believe this to be true of her transformation. We have a hard time making a distinction between Aseneth's *conversion* and *transformation*, however, especially because *Jos. Asen.* does not separate the two. Thus if her conversion is an experience others are to emulate, it seems to follow that the transformation she undergoes is then available to them as well.<sup>86</sup> Those who imitate Aseneth shall become immortal and incorruptible just as she has.

This being the case, what the work implies about those who are already members of God's people is perhaps even more remarkable. Recall that Aseneth is *not* Jewish naturally, but becomes such by way of conversion. Apparently, *natural* Jews already possess the qualities that Aseneth only comes to inherit after being transformed.

Aseneth is therefore not just a model convert. She is the prototype of the people of God, who are themselves the possessors of the new creation. Aseneth's experience signifies not just what happens to the individual who converts to Judaism. It signals their participation in the new creation that is taking place already in the present. Those who convert to Judaism join a people who *are* the means by which God is, even now, reversing the effects of the Fall. Certainly while the implications are cosmic, the emphasis is anthropological. For *Jos. Asen.* does not indicate that anything has yet to change among non-human elements of the created order. Burchard puts it well when he writes, 'Re-creation is the promotion from the deficient, nothing-but-human state naturally possessed by the heathen to the angelic status naturally possessed by the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Howard Clark Kee, 'The Socio-Cultural Setting of Joseph and Aseneth', *NTS* 29 (July 1983): 394–413.

Jews'.<sup>87</sup> To share in Aseneth's experience is not just to convert to Judaism. It is that and much more. To become a Jew is to enlist in the people whose very identity and existence are the fulfilment of the long-awaited hope for ontological renewal. It is to enlist in the people of the new creation.

### 6.3 A SUMMARY OF NON-PHILOSOPHICAL DIASPORA JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

The composers of *Jos. Asen.* conceive of humanity as having lost its edenic state of existence and become trapped in a mortal and corruptible state of being (NS). However, becoming a member of God's people leads to a change such that the convert becomes immortal and incorruptible (P<sup>1</sup>). Conversion, which includes ascetical disciplines among other more mystical engagements, begins the transformative process (P<sup>2</sup>). The DHE is one in which the human begins the process (DHE: HA), but the divine then takes over and, through the theophagic ingestion of God's presence, infiltrates the convert's being like food and drink (DHE: MA). The Spirit of life mixes with the convert in such a way that the two fuse together to become inseparable from one another (*Mix* Σ). Outward centripetality (Centri*P*) gives way during conversion to make the convert into a centrifugal creature (Centri*F*). The change that results from this encounter is one in which the convert joins a community who now return to an edenic state of existence inwardly (MT: TRH). But it is also one in which the convert becomes a creature whose ontological composition is entirely new—one who can actually eat of God's presence and not only survive, but thrive on its sustaining and transformative properties (MT: BH).

### 6.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Jos. Asen.* depicts the human creature as capable of changing to the point that it can become an angel-like being. Indeed, members of the chosen

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<sup>87</sup> Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', 192.

people of God are presently experiencing a renewal, refashioning and revivification of the most basic structures characteristic of the human creature, and this by way of theophagic ingestion of God's presence. They become ontologically akin to those in heaven and re-enter a state of existence like but seemingly greater than that which was lost at creation.

Certainly the experience of other Jews and converts to Judaism may not be outward and physical as Aseneth's is portrayed to have been, but it is undeniable that the convert to Judaism is thought to undergo an immortalisation and angelification in the same way that she has. And all of this is tied to the experience of ingestion of the pneumatic presence of God. After further discussion of Genus 4 in the following chapter, we will attempt in chapter eight to draw some conclusions about the ontoanthropology of Non-Philosophical Diaspora Judaism.

## CHAPTER 7

### EATING GOD'S SPLENDOUR A RABBINIC DOCTRINE OF MYSTICO-THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION

#### 7.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

We continue the discussion of Genus 4 (Theophagic Transformation) begun in the previous chapter, bringing the body of our exploration to a close. Our attention at this point is on Rabbinic Judaism (Species 4B). We limit our scope to a peculiar phenomenon very similar to that of the previous chapter, to which we refer in this case as mystico-theophagic transformation (see §6.1.3).

This phenomenon lies at the heart of an intriguing talmudic sugyah in Bavli *Soṭah* 49a. It links the experience of eating God's splendour with that of angel-like transformation. And what is found in this text is critical, not least because it is part of a widespread doctrine circulating among Jews of late antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1.2 THE RABBINIC MOVEMENT

The heterogeneous nature of the rabbinic movement and their literature do not allow for sweeping assertions about rabbinic thought and practice. What is known in hindsight as 'Rabbinic Judaism' was actually a diverse complex of groups, sub-groups, academies, schools and circles, each with its own peculiar identity, beliefs and practices.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there has long

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 15–16; cf. Alexander, 'Setting', 165–7.

<sup>2</sup> On this view of the rabbinic movement, see David M. Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (SJLA 9; Leiden: Brill, 1975); idem, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Self-Government in Antiquity* (TSAJ 38; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); idem, 'The History of the Babylonian Academies', in CHJ 4.821–39; Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Hayim Lapin, 'The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel', in CHJ 4.206–29. In opposition to Goodblatt et

been debate over the relationship between mysticism and normative or mainstream Judaism. Some hold that mysticism did not have a place in Judaism until recently.<sup>3</sup> David Halperin has insisted that mysticism was limited to the uneducated people of the land (עם הארץ).<sup>4</sup> Gershom Scholem, however, argued that mysticism had always been central to mainstream Judaism.<sup>5</sup> James Davila believes it was primarily limited to esoteric, shamanic communities in Babylonia.<sup>6</sup> Philip Alexander suggests that a number of ‘small, closely guarded conventicles’ of otherwise ‘orthodox’ Jews dealt in mystical matters.<sup>7</sup> Alexander’s assessment aligns with our understanding of the nature of the rabbinic movement as a complex of circles.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of how large or small the circle behind the composition of *b. Soṭah* 49a may have been, their opinions were expressive enough to find their way into the Bavli.<sup>9</sup>

### 7.1.3 THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD (BAVLI)

The Babylonian Talmud, or Bavli, is the magnum opus of the rabbinic movement.<sup>10</sup> It was constructed between the fifth and seventh centuries C.E. It consists of ‘tractates’, themselves comprised of *sugyot* (sing.:

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al., see Isaiah Gafni, ‘שׁיב׳ה ו׳מתיבתא׳ [“Yeshiva” and “Metivta”], *Zion* 43 (1978), 12–37; idem, ‘הערות למאמרו של ד׳ גודבלט׳ [‘Concerning D. Goodblatt’s Article’], *Zion* 46 (1981), 52–6. For a mediating position which nevertheless leans towards the arguments of Goodblatt, see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, ‘The Rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy: A Reexamination of the Talmudic Evidence’, *JSIJ* 1 (2002): 55–68; idem, ‘Social and Institutional Settings of Rabbinic Literature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (eds. C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee; Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 58–74.

<sup>3</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 12, 355; cf. Urbach, ‘המסורה’, 2–11; Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism, Volume 1: Late Antiquity* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aaronson, 1998), 304.

<sup>4</sup> Halperin, *Merkabah*, 105.

<sup>5</sup> Scholem, *Trends*, 40–1, 73; idem, *Gnosticism*, 23–4; idem, *Kabbalah*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> James Davila, *Descenders*, 288–9, 308; cf. Alexander, ‘Setting’, 171–3, who suggested this some time before Davila.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander, ‘3 Enoch’, 239; idem, ‘Setting’, 171–80; cf. Davila, *Descenders*, 255.

<sup>8</sup> Goodblatt, *Sasanian Babylonia*, 267–72; Alexander, ‘Setting’, 160–80.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Transformation’ nomenclature in RL includes: תַּנִּי, תַּנִּי (‘change’, *b. Bek.* 17a); נִתְּקָ (‘transformed’, ‘modified’, ‘shifted’, *b. Tem.* 9b); נַעֲשֶׂה (‘be made [into something else]’, ‘become’, *Num Rab.* 16.24); שְׁנִי, שְׁנִי (‘different’, *b. Meg.* 20a); הִפֵּךְ (‘to turn’, ‘change’, ‘reverse’, ‘disguise’, *Num Rab.* 9.1; *3 En.* 15.1; HZ 349).

<sup>10</sup> Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl, 190–224.

*sugyah*), or small units of text, which centre on various social, political and theological matters which pertain to life in a post-Temple world. Each tractate generally focuses on a biblical matter and recounts the rabbinic discussions that centred on them.

#### 7.1.4 INTRODUCTION TO *BAVLI SOTAH* 49A

The particular tractate we are interested in is called *Sotah*. This title comes from the *sotah* (סוֹטָה) ritual found in Num 5.11–31, which lays out procedures for dealing with an unfaithful woman. During the ritual, the woman was to be brought to the Temple and put through a series of tests designed to determine her guilt or innocence.

There is reason to believe that *b. Sotah* was not really concerned with the ritual at all. For one thing, *m. Sotah* —the Mishnah on which *b. Sotah* is based—points out that the ritual was abolished twenty years before the Temple’s destruction (*m. Sotah* 9.9). Additionally, by the time the Bavli was composed the central feature in the *sotah* ritual, the Temple, had been long gone. Lastly, by the tenth or eleventh c. C.E., the *sotah* ritual became the subject of Jewish mystical and magical thought and practice, as is evident in the text from the Cairo Genizah (Mss. JTSL ENA 3635.17 and TS K 1.56) entitled ‘*Inyan Sotah* (‘Concerning the Accused Woman’).<sup>11</sup> One could easily suggest from this that at least as early as late antiquity, the *sotah* ritual fuelled mystical speculation that was not fully realised until the early or high middle ages.

*B. Sotah* is therefore concerned not with the ritual per se but with the setting in which it was to have occurred: the Temple itself.<sup>12</sup> In the centuries after the Temple’s destruction, the Jewish people became

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza, Volume 1* (TSAJ 42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 17–45; Swartz, ‘Themes’, 305–15; Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: SUNY, 1990), 61–3.

<sup>12</sup> Adriana Destro, *The Law of Jealousy: Anthropology of Sotah* (BJS 181; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 25–7.

increasingly anxious about what to do in its absence. The *soṭah* ritual is merely a foil for the composers' entering into discussion about the much more pressing issue at hand: the missing Temple.

The Temple forms the ideological or ideational matrix of *b. Soṭah*, especially in pages 48a–49b.<sup>13</sup> It is no surprise to find the Temple motivating a potentially mystical text such as *b. Soṭah* 49a. For it had been the driving force behind Jewish mystical thought and practice at least as early as the time of Ezekiel, if not earlier (Ezek 1, 8, 10; Isa 6; *Jos. Asen.* 14–17; *1 En.* 14; *2 En.* 22; 1QS viii–xi; 4Q174; 4Q400–07).

## 7.2 BAVLI *SOṬAH* 49A AND THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

*B. Soṭah* 49a expresses a remarkable experience involving the encounter with God in the celestial Temple. We should quote our sugyah in whole before exploring it in detail in the sections below.

### 7.2.1 BAVLI *SOṬAH* 49A—TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The sugyah reads thus:

אמר ר' יהודה בריה דר' חייא כל ת"ח העוסק בתורה  
מתוך הדחק תפלתו נשמעת

שנאמר כי עם בציון ישב בירושלים בכה לא תבכה  
חנון יחנך לקול זעקך כשמעתו ענך וכתוב  
בתריה ונתן ה' לכם לחם צר ומים לחץ

ר' אבהו אומר משביעין אותו מזיו שכינה  
שנאמר והיו עיניך רואות את מורידך

ר' אחא בר חנינא אמר אף אין הפרגוד ננעל בפניו  
שנאמר ולא יכנף עוד מורידך

R. Judah b. R. Hiyya said: Any disciple of the Sages who occupies himself in Torah in the midst of *distress* (הדחק) has his Tefillah heard.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 106.

As it is said, 'For the people in Zion dwelling in Jerusalem shall assuredly weep no more. He will certainly grant his favour to you at the sound of your cry—when he hears, he will answer you' (Isa 30.19). And it continues, 'But the Lord shall give to you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction' (Isa 30.20).

R. Abbahu said: He shall be sated with the splendour of Shekhinah. As it is said, 'Your eyes shall see your Teacher' (Isa 30.20).

R. Aha b. Hanina said: The Pargod shall no longer be drawn closed before his face. As it is said, 'Your Teacher shall not be hidden any longer' (Isa 30.20—*b. Soṭah* 49a).<sup>14</sup>

Three brief observations should be helpful at this point.

#### 7.2.1.1 THE PARGOD AS KEY TO THE CELESTIAL SETTING

First, although R. Aha b. Hanina's comment about the Pargod (פרגוד)—not the Paroket (פרכת) of the earthly Temple (Exod 26.31, 33)—is the only explicit reference to the Temple, the significance of this term cannot be overstated. At very least, this term alone demonstrates that the Temple monument is of central concern.<sup>15</sup> What is more, the Pargod is the celestial counterpart to the Paroket of the earthly Temple.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> All English translations of rabbinic works are my own, unless otherwise noted. Texts in their original Hebrew and Aramaic are taken from Davka, *The Judaica Classics Library: Deluxe Edition* (Institute for Computers in Jewish Life and Davka Corporation, 2007). For the Hebrew text and an English translation of *m. Soṭah*, see Philip Blackman, *Mishnayot, Volume 3: Pointed Hebrew Text, English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Supplement, Appendix, Indexes, Addenda, Corrigenda* (New York: Judaica, 2d ed., 1964). For English translations, see Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: OUP, 1933), 293–307; Jacob Neusner, *Soṭah: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation* (CSHJTYI 27; Chicago: UCP, 1984).

<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to Lutz Doering (private communication) for his suggestions on matters pertaining to the Pargod.

<sup>16</sup> Otfried Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19f. und 10,19f.* (WUNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 4–19; Schaul Schaffer, *בית המקדש: תיאורו צורתו ותבניתו* [The Temple: Its Form and its Structure Described in Detail Together with Drawings and Diagrams] (Jerusalem: Yefeh-Nof, 1969), 68–9; Scholem, *Trends*, 72; idem, *Gnosticism*, 34; Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch or The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge: CUP, 1928), 141–2; Alinda Damsma, *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* (SAIS 13; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 57; Chernus, *Mysticism*, 81; Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* (NHS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 55; Halperin, *Merkabah*, 169; Morray-Jones, *Illusion*, 153–72; Alexander, '3 Enoch', 294–6; idem, 'The Family of Caesar and the Family of God: The Image of the



Pargod is the curtain that allegedly hangs before God in the heavenly Holy of Holies (*b. B. Meši'a* 59a; *b. Sanh.* 89b; *b. Hag.* 16a; *b. Yoma* 77a; *Abot R. Nat.* 3.8; *Deut Rab.* 84.16).<sup>17</sup> Only a select few are permitted to pass behind it and enter God's immediate presence, including the ministering angels (*b. Hag.* 16a; HZ 346), Gabriel (*b. Yoma* 77a) and Metatron (*3 En.* 45.1), to name a select few examples.<sup>18</sup>

An important point to note is that the Rabbis generally make reference to *sound* rather than *sight* when discussing the Pargod. Behind the Pargod God makes declarations that can be heard even from the outside (*b. Ber.* 18b; *b. Hag.* 16a; *Abot R. Nat.* 3.8; *Deut Rab.* 84.16). While the Rabbis are comfortable that humans can *hear* what is going on behind the Pargod, they seem a bit reluctant to speak of humans being able to *see* what goes on behind it.

This makes our sugyah all the more remarkable. For it mentions absolutely nothing about sound or the divine voice. It is thoroughly concerned with vision. That this shift from sound to sight is deliberate on the part of our sugyah's composers is evident in their use of Isa 30.19–20. As one can see from our quotation of the biblical text above, vv. 19–20 mention sight on a couple of occasions. Yet vv. 19–20 are not in themselves a completed thought: they find further elaboration in v. 21.

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Emperor in the Heikhalot Literature', in *Images of Empire* (JSOTSup 122; ed. L.C.A. Alexander; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 276–97; Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, 115–16; idem, *Apocalypticism*, 209; Mark Verman, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources* (SUNYSJ; Albany: SUNY, 1992), 47–8; Margaret Barker, 'Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses', *SJT* 51 (1998): 1–21; Jay Kanagaraj, 'Mysticism' in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background (JSNTSup 158; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 51; April D. DeConick, 'Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship: A Case for First-Century Christology in the Second Century', in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (SJSJ 63; eds. C.C. Newman et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 308–41 [319]; Theodor A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem von Salomo bis Herodes: eine archäologisch-historische Studie unter Berücksichtigung des Westsemitischen Tempelbaus, Band 2: Von Ezeiel bis Middot* (NIVHNO; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 1152; Deutsch, *Guardians*, 127–8; Hans Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1951), 73–4; Daniel M. Gurtner, 'The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend', *JETS* 49 (March 2006): 97–114.

<sup>17</sup> Morray-Jones, 'Hekhalot Zutarti', 372.

<sup>18</sup> Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 186.

Interestingly, v. 21 is wholly concerned with *hearing* God lay out a path for his people to follow. Our composers have thus picked the biblical unit of text apart, choosing only to quote the portion that deals with the vision of God but to ignore that which deals with God's voice altogether. Then they place vv. 19–20 rather creatively in dialogue with rabbis Judah, Abbahu and Aha, whose discussion—returning to our main point—centres on the vision of God behind the Pargod.

Furthermore, only in Hekhalot literature do we find such blatant association of sight with the radiant presence of God behind the Pargod. In *3 En.* 45.1 we learn that the Pargod shields the angels from the 'destructive glare of the divine glory'.<sup>19</sup> Just how audacious R. Judah's assertion in *b. Soṭah* 49a is in comparison to other sound-based traditions surrounding the Pargod will soon become clear. Here the reader's attention is being directed away from the troubles surrounding the now-missing earthly Temple and towards an *optical* experience—over against an *aural* experience—of God in his heavenly Temple.

#### 7.2.1.2 THE TEMPLE SETTING AND MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION

Second, the Temple setting is especially important when discussing rabbinic views of mystical transformation. An important example of human transformation that occurs specifically in the Holy of Holies comes in *Exod Rab.* 8.2. Here we find record of a tradition in which Joash, having entered the Holy of Holies, survives and exits unharmed. The princes of Judah come to him and bow before him, explaining that they are bowing before him because they believe he is a god (2 Chron 24.17):

Why did they prostrate themselves to the king? Because they made him a god (שעשאוהו אל לוד). They said to him, 'If you were not a god, you could not have departed after seven years from the House of the Holy of Holies'.

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<sup>19</sup> John M. Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008), 98; cf. George W. MacRae, 'The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth', *NovT* 12 (1970): 86–101.

Only someone who possesses a divine-like ontological state can enter the Holy of Holies (illegitimately) and come out alive.

#### 7.2.1.3 THE THESIS STATEMENT OF BAVLI SOṬAH 49A

Third, the thesis statement of the sugyah comes in R. Judah b. Hiyya's opening remark: 'Any disciple of the sages (2) who occupies himself in Torah in the midst of (1) עָוָר has his (3) Tefillah heard'. This comment contains the markings of a thesis statement, and we have numbered the three key points in the order of their treatment below. #1 identifies the plight being addressed in the sugyah—the עָוָר, or oppression. #2 contains the solution the reader is urged to put into action in order to overcome the plight. And #3 describes the reward the reader receives when the solution (#2) is put into action. Having one's prayer heard and bringing an end to the oppression thus occur when the disciple is occupied in Torah. R. Judah b. Hiyya offers the thesis to which R. Abbahu and R. Aha b. Hanina add clarity.

#### 7.2.2 THE PLIGHT—A WORLD IN עָוָר

*B. Soṭah* 48a–49b expands on *m. Soṭah* 9.11–15. This Mishnah is one of a few instances in which the Tannaim actually acknowledge that the Temple no longer exists (cf. *m. Roš Haš.* 4.1–4).<sup>20</sup> The earliest rabbis prefer to ignore the catastrophe as if to say that things are just fine rather than to face the reality of life without the Temple.<sup>21</sup>

##### 7.2.2.1 LIFE IN THE WAKE OF 70 C.E.

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<sup>20</sup> David Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 60.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

*M. Soṭah* 9.11–15, however, avers that things are not fine.<sup>22</sup> In a sequence of cause-and-effect pronouncements, *m. Soṭah* 9.12 associates each tragic *effect* facing post-Temple Israel with its historical *cause*. Each pronouncement follows a pattern to the effect of, ‘When X occurred, Y took place, or ceased’. Thus when the Temple was destroyed, ‘the Shamir ceased’; ‘the Nofeth Zufim ceased’; ‘men of faith ceased to exist’; ‘there is no day without a curse’; ‘the dew has not come down for blessing’; and ‘the fruits have lost their taste’ and ‘fatness’ (*m. Soṭah* 9.12; *b. Soṭah* 48a).<sup>23</sup> *M. Soṭah* 9.13 then adds, following a slightly different pattern, that because of the loss of the Temple, ‘The purity has ceased and has thus removed fragrance’, ‘The tithing has ceased and has removed the fatness of corn’, and ‘Harlotry and sorcery have increased and have destroyed everything’ (*m. Soṭah* 9.13; *b. Soṭah* 48a). *M. Soṭah* 9.14 then concludes that the pinnacle moment of the War of Vespasian was none other than the destruction of the Temple (cf. *b. Soṭah* 49b).

The Talmud adds further that God no longer communicates with Israel as he did in the past. After the destruction of the First Temple, the Urim and Thummim disappeared and the Holy Spirit departed (*b. Soṭah* 48b). All that remained after the Spirit’s departure was the Bath Qol, or heavenly voice (*b. Soṭah* 48b; cf. *t. Soṭah* 13.2; *b. Soṭah* 2a, 10b, 13b, 33a). Communication and contact with God were reduced to an aural experience rather than the more intimate ocular one.

Everything that went wrong in Israel’s history reached its climax in 70 C.E.<sup>24</sup> The mood of those in this post-temple era is summed up in the quip of Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel and R. Joshua:

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<sup>22</sup> Graham I. Davies, ‘The Presence of God in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Doctrine’, in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (JSNTSup 48; ed. W. Horbury; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 32–6; Swartz, ‘Themes’, 306.

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Grushcow, *Writing the Wayward Wife: Rabbinic Interpretations of Soṭah* (AGJU 62; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 236.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Goldenberg, ‘The Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: Its Meaning and its Consequences’, in CHJ 4.191–205; Lee I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and*

'From the day the Temple was destroyed, there is no day without a curse' (*m. Soṭah* 9.12; *b. Soṭah* 48a).

The loss of the Temple is without question the primary concern of this portion of *b. Soṭah*. When R. Judah b. Hiyya comments that the disciple is 'in the midst of' קִלְקָלָה, he is referencing the dreadful period of history which began in 70 C.E. and which will ostensibly continue until the Eschaton.

#### 7.2.2.2 קִלְקָלָה AS CORPORATE AFFLICTION AND PERSONAL ASCETICISM

קִלְקָלָה is an interesting term in this context. It connotes the 'suffocation', 'squeezing', 'pressing', 'oppression' or 'poverty' facing the Jewish people of late antiquity (*b. Pesah.* 95b; *b. Menah.* 98b; *b. Nid.* 9b; *Tg. Yer. I Deut* 26.7). It describes a state of corporate affliction, or 'oppression', stemming from the loss of the Temple.<sup>25</sup> In addition to a corporate state of affliction, however, קִלְקָלָה signifies a personal state of affliction of sorts (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 35b; *Tg. Onq. Num* 22.25).<sup>26</sup>

It is plausible that in our sugyah R. Judah is deliberately evoking the double meaning of קִלְקָלָה—i.e. *both* the corporate affliction suffocating the Jewish people *and* the personal, self-inflicted asceticism of the ardent disciple. The phenomenon of mystical empowerment thus seems to be in play here again (see §1.2.4).

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*Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999); Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 1–17; Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002); Timothy Scott Wardle, *Continuity and Discontinuity: The Temple and Early Christian Identity* (PhD Thesis: Duke University, 2008), 33–40; Rachel Elior, 'The Jerusalem Temple: The Representation of the Imperceptible', *Studies in Spirituality* 11 (2000): 126–43; Stefan C. Reif, 'Jerusalem in Jewish Liturgy', in *Jerusalem*, 424–37.

<sup>25</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 80–1.

<sup>26</sup> Jastrow, 293.

We know that the Temple's destruction ushered in a heightened appreciation for asceticism.<sup>27</sup> In fact, *t. Soṭah* 15—the portion of Tosefta corresponding to the portions of the Mishnah and Bavli we are discussing. *T. Soṭah* 15 clearly attests to the wave of asceticism following 70 C.E. (cf. *m. Soṭah* 3.4; *y. Soṭah* 5.7, 20c; *b. Soṭah* 22b; 34b):

Rabban Simeon ben Gamliel said . . . From the time when the latter (Second) Temple was destroyed, ascetics became numerous in Israel, and they would not eat meat and they would not drink wine (*t. Soṭah* 15.10–12; cf. *b. B. Bat.* 60b; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 35b).<sup>28</sup>

The bodily discipline portrayed in this text came to have a place on the Ninth of Av—the day on which the Jewish people mourned the loss of the Temple—more than on any other holiday (*m. Soṭah* 9.12, 15; *m. Ta'an* 4.6; *m. Mo'ed Qaṭ.* 3.6; *m. Sukkah* 3.12; *m. Roš Haš.* 4.3; *m. Menah.* 10.5; *m. Yoma* 1–7b).

It is hard to think the circle behind *b. Soṭah* 49a were unaware of the ascetical enthusiasm prompted by the events of 70 C.E. The specific activity to which R. Judah is pointing is the occupation with Torah and engagement in Tefillah. Perhaps he has in mind something similar to R. Eleazar, who states, 'Since the destruction of the Temple, the gates of Tefillah are locked . . . [but] the gates of tears are not' (*b. B. Meši'a* 59a, quoting Lam 3.8; Ps 39.13). Prayer coupled with grief is sure to reach God's ears and bring about his favour. The literary and historical contexts of our sugyah clearly support our understanding of פתח as having both corporate and individual implications.

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<sup>27</sup> Steven D. Fraade, 'Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism', in *Jewish Spirituality*, 253–88 [269–77]; cf. James A. Montgomery, 'Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism', *JBL* 51 (Sept 1932): 183–213; Urbach, *Sages* 443–8.

<sup>28</sup> Translation is that of Susan Berrin, 'Soṭah', in *Tosefta, Nashim* 2 (ed. S. Lieberman; New York: JTSA, 1973), 242–4; cf. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1998), 471.

### 7.2.3 THE SOLUTION—OCCUPATION IN TORAH

Overcoming קָחַח begins with ‘occupying’ (עִסַּק) oneself with Torah. עִסַּק denotes occupation in both religious and secular matters (*m. Yoma* 1.7; *m. Soṭah* 1.9; *Midr. Pss.* 7; *y. Hag.* 2.77b; *b. Sukkah* 25a; *b. Ketub.* 103b; *b. Pesah.* 50b; *b. Ber.* 17a), though here in *b. Soṭah* 49a the sense is clearly religious.<sup>29</sup> R. Judah calls the disciple הַעֲוִסֵק, literally ‘the occupier’. The sense is that the disciple is engaging himself in this activity in a continual or habitual fashion.

The question becomes at this point: how does Torah occupation solve the problem of קָחַח? That is, how does the former alleviate the trials that have come about in the absence of the latter? The answer almost certainly lies in the relationship between Torah and Temple.

#### 7.2.3.1 TORAH AND TEMPLE IN LATE-ANTIQUÉ JUDAISM

This association is not new to R. Judah. Torah and Temple had been associated with one another for some time, especially in the aftermath of 70 C.E. As Jacob Neusner explains:

The rabbinic ideal further maintained that the rabbi served as the new priest, the study of Torah substituted for the Temple sacrifice, and deeds of loving kindness were the social surrogate for the sin-offering, that is, personal sacrifice instead of animal sacrifice.<sup>30</sup>

Torah occupation in particular became a principal means of carrying on the Temple cult. Neusner goes on to add that rabbinic forms of mysticism were firmly rooted in Torah study. As he explains, mysticism ‘from

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<sup>29</sup> On עִסַּק in *Tg. Ps-J*, see C.T.R. Hayward, ‘The Priestly Blessing in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*’, *JSP* 19 (1999): 81–101 [85].

<sup>30</sup> Jacob Neusner, ‘Introduction’, in *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism: From Talmudic to Modern Times* (ed. idem; New York: KTAV, 1974), 5–26 [13].

beginning to end, gave vividness and vitality to the life of Torah, including the keeping of the Torah's laws'.<sup>31</sup>

After the destruction of the Temple, Torah came to be viewed as a meeting point between heaven and earth just as the Temple had always been.<sup>32</sup> In a very real way, Torah became God's home after his other one—the Temple—was destroyed.<sup>33</sup> For when God gave Torah to Israel, he gave them a fragment of his presence. *Exod Rab.* attests to this tradition:

The Holy One Blessed be He said to Israel: I have sold you my Torah, but with it, as it were, I have also been sold (נמכרתִי עִמָּךְ). As it says, 'They take *me* as an offering (Exod 25.2) . . . I have given you the Torah from which I cannot part, and I also cannot tell you not to take it. So I request this of you, that wherever you go you would make for me a house (בֵּית) in which I might sojourn'. As it says, 'And let them make for me a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ), that I may dwell among them' (Exod 25.8—*Exod Rab.* 33.1).

*Exod Rab.* equates Torah with the sanctuary—the portable container of God's presence. And *M. 'Abot* explains, 'Moses received Torah at Sinai and passed it on to Joshua; Joshua passed it on to the Elders; the Elders passed it on to the Prophets; the Prophets passed it on to the men of the Great Synagogue' (1.1). Because of this successive chain of contact, Torah remains infused with God's presence even today. To make contact with it would be to make contact with God (*m. 'Abot* 3.2–6; cf. *b. Soṭah* 4b; *b. Ber.* 6a; 64a; *b. Ketub.* 111b; *b. Sukkah* 53a; *Exod Rab.* 5.5; 33.1; 47.6).<sup>34</sup> And to make contact with someone who had recently been occupied with Torah would likewise be to make contact with God. As R. Abin the Levite

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>32</sup> Marc G. Hirschman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E.–350 C.E.: Texts on Education and their Late Antique Context* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 3–16, 41–8; idem, 'Torah in Rabbinic Thought: The Theology of Learning', in CHJ 4.899–924.

<sup>33</sup> Hirschman, 'Torah', 923.

<sup>34</sup> Benedict Thomas Viviano, *Study as Worship: Aboth and the New Testament* (SJLA 26; Brill: Leiden, 1978), 69–70.



asserts, 'If one partakes in a meal at which a scholar is present, it is as if he has eaten of the splendour of Shekhinah' (*b. Ber.* 64a).<sup>35</sup>

#### 7.2.3.2 TORAH AND TEMPLE IN BAVLI SOTAH 49A

Several indicators in our sugyah and in its context suggest the composers of *b. Sotah* 49a likewise viewed Torah as a means to making contact with the divine. Preceding our sugyah, for example, R. Elai b. Jebarekya offers several anecdotes. In one of these, he explains that Torah study is capable of inciting ecstatic experiences:

If two disciples of the Sages proceed on a journey and there are no words of Torah between them, they are worthy of being burnt with fire (ראוין לִישָׁרִף בְּאֵשׁ). As it is stated, 'And it came to pass, as they kept on walking and talking, a chariot of fire (רֶכֶב אֵשׁ), etc' (2 Kgs 2.11). The reason [why the fiery chariot appeared] was that there was discussion [of Torah between them]. If there had not been such discussion, they would be worthy of being burnt (ראוין לִישָׁרִף, *b. Sotah* 49a).

Two observations should be made on this anecdote. First, Torah occupation led to the vision of the fiery chariot, a common image in ancient Jewish mysticism.<sup>36</sup> Discussion while 'walking' is also a regular occurrence in early Jewish mystical lore (*b. Hag.* 15a).<sup>37</sup>

Second, the disciples' conversation about Torah protected them while they beheld the fiery scene. The idea that Torah bestows divine protection is surprisingly widespread in ancient Judaism. For example, *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* recalls that Torah acceptance, which is equal to the vision of God's face, protected Israel from destruction at Sinai:

Had they not accepted Torah, the angels would have tried to destroy them. Israel had seen the face of the Holy One Blessed be He (שְׂרָאוּ פְנֵי הַקֹּדֶם ה').

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ahuva Ho, *The Targum of Zephaniah: Manuscripts and Commentary* (SAIS 7; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 328–9.

<sup>36</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 74–87, 108–25; cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, 'Knowledge and Vision: Towards a Clarification of Two "Gnostic" Concepts in the Light of their Alleged Origins', *IOS* 3 (1973): 63–107 [89].

<sup>37</sup> Segal, 'Beginning', 109.

However, as R. Levi said: He who has seen the face of the Holy One Blessed be He and who sees the face of the King shall not die (פני המלך אינו מת). As it is said, 'In the light of the king's face there is life' (באור פני) (ומי שראה בלך, Prov 16.15—*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12.22).

Again in *b. Soṭah* 49a, R. Elai tells a second tale on the protective nature of Torah:

If two disciples of the Sages reside in the same city and do not support each other in [the study of] the law, one dies and the other goes into exile . . . And 'knowledge' means nothing but Torah. As it is stated, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hos 4.6). And 'knowledge' means nothing but 'Torah' (*b. Soṭah* 49a).

Torah occupation is critical to Israel's survival (cf. *m. 'Abot* 1.2; *b. Šabb.* 30b). When Israel fails to study Torah, they are sure to face destruction.

Even though no mention is made of the Temple, R. Elai's anecdotes posit Torah as a powerful entity. It has sustained Israel during difficult times in history. It alleviates different types of corporate affliction. Most importantly, it is the site of encounter between God and humankind.

Archaeological evidence suggests this mystico-magical view of Torah probably extended to actual synagogue practice. Some four amulets were found at the head of one synagogue where the Torah scroll would have lain.<sup>38</sup> Since that location was viewed as a juncture between heaven and earth, the amulets would have guarded it, keeping evil beings from entering during study.<sup>39</sup> The belief was that the veil between heaven and earth is most permeable during Torah study more than at other lesser sacred times.

Torah occupation was seen as a mystical enterprise, even within so-called normative Judaism. Torah study leads to visions of heaven. God's presence now resides *in Torah* (בתורה) rather than *in* the Temple. In Torah, therefore, the experience of the divine is to be sought, just as if one were standing in the Temple.

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<sup>38</sup> Naved and Shaked, *Amulets*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 36.

#### 7.2.4 THE REWARD—HAVING ONE’S TEFILLAH HEARD

The reward for the one occupied in/with Torah is to have his Tefillah heard. There is a connection in R. Judah’s mind between Torah occupation and Tefillah performance. The reason for this connection is not difficult to see. Like Torah, Tefillah became a substitute for the Temple in the centuries after its destruction, a place in which the disciple could meet God directly.

Initial indication of this doctrine can be found once again in R. Elai b. Jebarakya’s anecdotes preceding our sugyah in *b. Soṭah* 49a. Above we saw his portrayal of Torah in mystical light. Here, too, he depicts Tefillah similarly:

Had it not been for the prayer of David, all Israel would have been sellers of rubbish. As it is stated, ‘Grant them esteem, O Lord’ (Ps 9.21).

Had it not been for the prayer of Habakkuk, two disciples of the Sages would have to cover themselves with one Talit while occupied in Torah (יעוסקין בתורה, *b. Soṭah* 49a).

Prayer saved Israel at two decisive moments in history. While these two anecdotes do not mention the Temple, they do indicate that Tefillah is a powerful entity that can end or prevent even the most difficult of circumstances. They prime the reader for R. Judah’s comment that will soon follow.

The mystical nature of the prayer experience which R. Judah has in mind becomes especially clear when read his comment alongside those of R. Abbahu and R. Aha in the same sugyah, and even clearer when we read it in the light of broader Jewish life and thought of late antiquity. Three important synagogue prayers seem especially to embody the mystical-temple ideology being expressed in *b. Soṭah* 49a. These include the Amidah, the Priestly Blessing and the Qaddish, all of which seem to feature in the mystical thinking of our sugyah’s composers. For our

composers, these have become the means by which the disciple can obtain the direct encounter with God.

#### 7.2.4.1 THE AMIDAH

The Amidah became indispensable for Jews in their attempt to preserve the Temple and its service after 70 C.E. (*b. Sanh.* 22a; *b. Yoma* 53b; *b. Ta'an* 2a; *b. Soṭah* 5a).<sup>40</sup> Before the destruction, the Amidah merely accompanied the Temple and its service (*Jdt* 9.7; *Luke* 1.10; *Jos, C. Ap.* 2.23; *m. Tamid* 5.1).<sup>41</sup> It gave the Jewish people a way to offer up petition to the Lord at the same time the priests offered the sacrifices, so that both would waft to the heavens, before the Lord, and bring his favour upon Israel. After the destruction, however, it became an institutionalised analogue to the Temple and its service, a spiritual version of the sacrifice much the way liturgy did at Qumran and the way other liturgies, rituals and magical techniques did during this period (1QS viii–ix; cf. *Exod Rab.* 38.4).<sup>42</sup>

Based on its association with the Temple, the Amidah was to be performed in a manner analogous to the priestly service.<sup>43</sup> Practitioners

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<sup>40</sup> Israel Abrahams, 'Some Rabbinic Ideas on Prayer', *JQR* 20 (1908): 272–93 [288]. On the Amidah, see Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 88–121; Joseph Heinemann, תפילת ה' [Insights on Prayer] (ed. Avigdor Shinan; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), 12–21; Louis Finkelstein, 'The Development of the Amidah', *JQR* NS 16 (July 1925): 1–43; idem, 'The Development of the Amidah', *JQR* NS 16 (Oct 1925): 127–70; Solomon Zeitlin, 'The Tefillah, the Shemoneh Esreh: An Historical Study of the First Canonization of the Hebrew Liturgy', *JQR* NS 54 (Jan 1964): 208–49.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *t. Ber.* 3.13; *m. Ta'an.* 4.2–3; *m. Yoma* 7.1; *m. Roš Haš.* 4.5; *m. Ber.* 4.3–18; *y. Ber.* 4.1, 7a, 8a; *b. Ber.* 15a; 26b; 32b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24.19; *Gen Rab.* 68.9; *Sipre Deut* 393; *Midr. Pss.* 17.4; *Num Rab.* 2.1–5. See Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (SJ 9; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 123–38; Richard S. Sarason, 'The "Intersections" of Qumran and Rabbinic Judaism', *DSD* 8 (2001): 169–81 [180].

<sup>42</sup> Michael D. Swartz, 'Divination and its Discontents: Finding and Questioning Meaning in Ancient and Medieval Judaism', in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (MH; eds. S. Noegel et al.; University Park, Pa.: The University of Pennsylvania State, 2003), 155–66 [164]. Cf. Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte* 1, 17–45.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. *Sipre Deut* 167; *t. Ber.* 2.19–21; *y. Ber.* 3.5, 6d; *y. Meg.* 3.1, 73d; *b. Qidd.* 33b; *b. Ber.* 10b; 28b; *b. Sanh.* 42a; *b. Ta'an.* 2a; *b. Meg.* 27b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24.19; *Gen Rab.*

were to say it twice a day, to assume the posture of the priests and angels serving before God, to whisper quietly in acknowledgement of Shekhinah's closeness (*y. Ber.* 9.1, 13a; *Midr. Pss.* 4.3; *Deut Rab.* 2.10; *b. Ber.* 24b), and to do the entire performance with utmost bodily and cognitive focus.<sup>44</sup> Thus we read, 'If a man cannot turn his face, he should then concentrate his thoughts on the Holy of Holies' (*b. Ber.* 28b; cf. *b. Qidd.* 33b; *b. Sanh.* 42a; *Dan* 6.10).<sup>45</sup>

The Amidah was believed to lead the performer into God's presence, where petitions and praise—those alternative 'sacrifices'—could be presented to him. The entire enterprise was one of immediate proximity between human and divine. Hence the importance of the admonition in *b. Ber.* 28b, 'When you pray, know before whom you are standing'.<sup>46</sup> It is interesting that to enter the performance of the Amidah was 'to pass before the Ark' (העובר לפני התיבה) or 'descend to the Ark' (ולירד לפני התיבה); see *b. Ta'an.* 2a; 2b, 3a, 4b, 15a, 15b; *Exod Rab.* 38.4; *b. Hul.* 24b).<sup>47</sup> Though one would need more space than we have to elaborate on this, it may be plausible to link the performance of the Amidah to 'descending the Merkavah' in Hekhalot literature (cf. *Lev Rab.* 23.4; *Midr. Pss.* 17.5; 19.2).<sup>48</sup> We can see already the way the entire Amidah experience was based on the notion of entering temple-space and

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65.21. See also Reuven R. Kimelman, 'Rabbinic Prayer in Late Antiquity', in *CHJ* 4.573–611 [591]; Fred S. Naidén, *Ancient Supplication* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 29–104

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Pieter W. van der Horst, 'Silent Prayer in Antiquity', *Numen* 41 (Jan 1994): 1–25; Matthias Klinghardt, 'Prayer Formularies for Public Recitation. Their Use and Function in Ancient Religion', *Numen* 46 (1999): 1–52.

<sup>45</sup> Kimelman, 'Prayer', 573–611; Montgomery, 'Strains', 183–213.

<sup>46</sup> Uri Ehrlich, "'When You Pray Know Before Whom You Are Standing" (*b. Ber.* 28b)', *JJS* 49 (1998): 38–50; idem, *The Non-Verbal Language of Jewish Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy* (TSAJ 105; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 160–7; Kimelman, 'Prayer', in *CHJ* 4.591–8.

<sup>47</sup> Shaul Shaked, 'Quests and Visionary Journeys in Sasanian Iran', in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (SHR 83; eds. J. Assmann and G.G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 65–86 [80]; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 20 n. 1; Gruenwald, *Apocalypticism*, 170–1.

<sup>48</sup> Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: YUP, 2d ed., 2005), 376–9.

encountering God therein. We will discuss its relationship specifically to *b. Soṭah* 49a below in §7.2.5.

#### 7.2.4.2 *The Priestly Blessing*

Like the Amidah, the Priestly Blessing (PB) aided the Jewish people in their attempts to reproduce experience of the Temple in the centuries following 70 C.E. (*b. Hul.* 24b). It had direct ties to the Temple, having long been pronounced after the offering of the sacrifices (*M. Tamid* 7.2; cf. *m. Taʿan.* 4.1).<sup>49</sup> This prayer in particular has been shown to have had mystico-magical significance as far back as the eighth century B.C.E.<sup>50</sup>

After the Temple was lost, many Jews came to view the PB as a petition for God to shine his face upon them in a very mystical-experiential way. The priests had long performed the PB in the Temple. Through it they allegedly channelled God’s radiance to those in observance in the Temple courts. After 70 C.E., however, the setting for the PB shifted from the Temple to a more personalised one, such as the synagogue.

The key element in the PB, at least for our purposes, is its depiction of God’s face as capable of bestowing mystical properties on those who behold it. *Sipre* נצו 41 (third c. C.E.) claims, for example, “‘The Lord make his face shine upon you’ (Num 6.25) actually refers to ‘the brightness of Shekhinah’”. The PB is here taken to speak about the mystical ‘brightness’ of God’s face shining upon the one in prayer.<sup>51</sup> *Tg. Ps-J.* (fourth c. C.E.) goes further and associates both the occupation in Torah and

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<sup>49</sup> On the PB, see Sarason, ‘Intersections’, 169–81; Daniel K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 27; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 77; Esther Eshel, ‘Apotropaic Prayers in the Second Temple Period’, in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 48; eds. E.G. Chazon et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 69–88; Hayward, ‘Blessing’, 91–101.

<sup>50</sup> Ada Yardeni, ‘Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on Two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem’, *VT* 41 (April 1991): 176–85; J.M. Hadley, ‘Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud’, *VT* 37 (1987): 180–211.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 44; Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl 266–8.

performance of Tefillah with the experience of beholding God's face.<sup>52</sup> His version of the prayer reads:

The Lord bless you *in all your occupations*, and keep you *from night demons and from frightening demons and noon-day demons and morning demons and damaging demons and shadow demons* (v. 24).

May the Lord make *the splendour of his face* lighten upon you *when you are occupied in the Torah*, and may he reveal to you *hidden things* and show consideration to you (v. 25).

May the Lord *make the splendour of his face shine* upon you *when you pray*, and may he grant peace for you *in all your borders* (v. 26).<sup>53</sup>

Robert Hayward rightly insists that *Tg. Ps-J.* does not have anything 'magical' in mind here.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the targumist associates Torah and Tefillah with a very real encounter with God's face, where its properties benefit the individual. That *Tg. Ps-J.* finds such ideas in the PB at least indicates that quasi-mystical traditions about God's face were in circulation, even outside of the academies.

#### 7.2.4.3 THE QEDUSHAH DE-SIDRA

The third prayer earning a new significance in Judaism following the Temple's destruction is the Qedushah de-Sidra (QS).<sup>55</sup> In the synagogue setting, the congregation recited the QS at the conclusion of the service after Torah study.<sup>56</sup> The QS would have been comprised of the 'Sanctification of the Name' and 'Study of Torah'. Rashi explains that the purpose of the QS was to allow those who arrived late and who missed

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<sup>52</sup> Philip S. Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists of Forbidden Targumim', *JJS* 27 (1976): 177–91.

<sup>53</sup> We follow Hayward's translation of *Tg. Ps-J.* Num 6.24–26 (Hayward, 'Blessing', 85). Cf. Eshel, 'Apotropaic Prayers', 71.

<sup>54</sup> Hayward, 'Blessing', 88.

<sup>55</sup> On which, see Israel M. Kahan and Aviel Orenstein, *Mishnah Berurah: Hebrew-English Edition, Volume 5/2A* (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1993), 99–115.

<sup>56</sup> Israel Abrahams, *Annotated Edition of the Authorised Daily Prayer Book* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1914), lxxxii–lxxxiv.

Blessing 3 (קדשת השם) of the Amidah a second chance to sanctify God's name in their native Aramaic tongue.<sup>57</sup>

This prayer features prominently in what follows our sugyah, where the Rabbis try to figure out what to do without the Temple:

Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says in the name of R. Joshua: From the day the Temple was destroyed, there is no (day) [without a curse]. Raba said: The curse of each day is worse than that of the preceding . . .

How, then, can the world endure (מקי'ים)? By means of the Qedushah de-Sidra, as well as 'May his name be great' after the Aggada. As it says, 'The land is as dark as thick-darkness and without order' (ולא סדרים, Job 10.22). If there are Sedarim, it shines from thick-darkness (*b. Soṭah* 49a).

The particle מקי' makes plain how desperate our composers are. Indeed, Raba fears that the world may not 'endure' (מקי'ים) without the Temple.

Our talmudists propose the QS and the Qaddish as a solution. The Qaddish has remarkable ties not just to the Temple but to its *destruction*.<sup>58</sup> When God hears his people performing it, for example, he likens himself to a father who, by allowing the Temple to be destroyed, has sent his son into exile (*b. Ber.* 3a). Also, the Qaddish was thought to have the power to open the gates of the Garden of Eden and bring an end to the most terrible suffering (*b. Šabb.* 119a).<sup>59</sup> Nothing could be worse than to lose the Temple, that monument which had long held the world together.

Furthermore, the talmudists exegete the constituent parts of the title 'Qedushah de-Sidra' to address this very problem (cf. *b. Ber.* 21b). The word 'sidra' (סידרא) literally means 'order', taken from Job 10.22.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Andreas Lehnardt, "Therefore they ordained to say it in Aramaic": Some Remarks on the Language and Style of the Kaddish, in *Biblical, Rabbinical, and Medieval Studies* (JSTTC 1; PEAJSC 6; eds. J.T. Borrás and Á. Sáenz-Badillos; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 303–10.

<sup>58</sup> The key line in the Qaddish reads, 'May his great name be blessed for ever and ever' (יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא).

<sup>59</sup> Nosson Scherman, *The Kaddish Prayer: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (AMS: Kaddish; Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 3d ed., 1991), vi–viii.





presence to Zion. It is no wonder that the Amidah is known as the 'Jewish petitionary prayer *par excellence*'.<sup>61</sup>

#### 7.2.5.2 THE RETURN OF SHEKHINAH TO ZION

Second, the return of Shekhinah to Zion is among the key petitions in the Amidah and the QS on the one hand, and Isa 30.19-20 and our sugyah on the other (cf. *Tg. Jon.* Isa 30.19-20; Amidah: Blessing 17 [עבודה]). In the QS, the congregants recite the line: 'And a redeemer shall come to Zion' (וְבֹא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל). The Amidah likewise points to Zion as the site of encounter between Shekhinah and Israel. When reciting Blessing 17 (עבודה) of the Amidah, for example, the congregants plead: 'May our eyes behold your return to Zion in compassion. Blessed are you O Lord who restores his Shekhinah to Zion'.<sup>62</sup>

As George Caird notes, 'Zion' evoked strong emotion and nostalgia in the minds of ancient Jews.<sup>63</sup> It is a 'trigger symbol', or a word carrying a 'higher degree of idealisation' than others (e.g. Pss 2.6; 9.11[12]; 99.2; 110.2).<sup>64</sup> *B. Soṭah* 49a redeploys Isa 30.19 to propagate a sort of mystical Zionist ideology, where those 'weeping' and 'crying' in Zion pray for a personal, face-to-face encounter with Shekhinah.

#### 7.2.5.3 TORAH AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH GOD'S FACE

Third, the Amidah, the PB and our sugyah extend a common tradition in which Torah occupation is equated with the vivifying encounter with God's face. Blessing 5 (תשובה) of the Amidah is a prime example of this.

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<sup>61</sup> Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 243.

<sup>62</sup> Hebrew text of the Amidah, Priestly Blessing and Qedushah are from Simeon Singer and Jonathan Sacks (eds. and trans.), *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth* (London: Collins, 4th ed., 2007).

<sup>63</sup> George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*; cf. Hollenback, *Mysticism*, 22, 25.

It associates the study of Torah with the Temple service and with the face-to-face encounter with God:

Return us our Father to your Torah.  
Draw us near our King to your service.  
Restore us in complete repentance to your face.

This blessing juxtaposes three actions: to 'return' (השיבנו), to 'draw near' (קרבנו) and to 'be restored' (החזירנו) to God's face. These actions are one and the same event. To return to Torah is to draw near to God and to be restored before his face.

Blessing 19 (שים שלום) likewise links Torah to God's face. Thus the blessing praises God: 'With the light of your face, O YHWH our God, you gave us the Torah of life'. Torah occupation as a means to encountering God's face thus finds attestation even in non-academic milieu, namely, the prayer which many Jews of the period would either have performed on a daily basis or have been familiar with its contents, at least in Palestinian and Babylonian settings. And as we saw above, *Tg. Ps-J.*'s Aramaic translation of the PB presents an interesting divergence from the original Hebrew, extending a tradition in which Torah and Tefillah lead to an encounter with God's face.

*B. Soṭah* 49a, too, proposes Torah 'occupation' (עסק) as the site of encounter between the disciple and Shekhinah. R. Abbahu's comment and the corresponding portion of Isa 30.20b indicate that this site, like Zion, serves as a meeting point between heaven and earth (cf. *b. Ta'an* 7a). To encounter Torah is to encounter God himself. Among the benefits the disciple receives from this encounter is the ingestion of God's 'splendour' (זיו) and experience of transcendent 'satisfaction' (שבט). This experience leads ultimately to the overcoming of דחוק.

### 7.3 A RABBINIC DOCTRINE OF MYSTICO-THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION

The programme our sugyah sets forth is designed to lead the disciple into an experience of God in his celestial Temple. This experience entails an ontological change in the disciple, such that he or she is capable of ingesting the splendour of Shekhinah (see §7.2). By ingesting the divine light-stuff, the disciple then experiences transcendent satisfaction.

#### 7.3.1 MYSTICO-THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION IN *BAVLI SOTAH* 49A

R. Abbahu's pointed assertion that 'He shall be sated from the splendour of Shekhinah' is critical to understanding the experience being described in our sugyah. To understand it, we must discuss its three constituent terms and then make a brief note about its structure. Doing so will substantiate our understanding of *b. Sotah* 49a in terms of mystico-theophagic transformation.

##### 7.3.1.1 SHEKHINAH (שכינה)

First, שכינה (from שכן: 'to dwell') is a reference to the 'dwelling' or 'presence' of God among humankind, as Urbach has argued.<sup>65</sup> Joshua Abelson is probably also correct that some instances of שכינה emphasise the divine radiance rather than merely divine presence (*Eccl. Rab.* 8.3; *Mek. Yitro* 2; *b. Ber.* 13a).<sup>66</sup> We understand Shekhinah as a reference to God himself, which emphasises his proximity to humankind. And when paired with ז"י (see §7.3.1.2), there is surely an emphasis on the radiant nature of God's presence.

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<sup>65</sup> Ephraim E. Urbach, 'The Shekhina—The Presence of God in the World', in *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2d ed., 1975), 37–65 [45–6]; cf. Arthur Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: I. The Names and Attributes of God* (London: OUP, 1927), 148–53; George Foot Moore, 'Intermediaries in Jewish Theology—Memra, Shekinah, Metatron', *HTR* 15 (Jan 1922): 41–85.

<sup>66</sup> Joshua Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1912).

*B. Soṭah* 48b remarks that only a select few are ‘worthy’ (יָסִיךְ) of Shekhinah to ‘rest’ (שָׁרָה) upon them (cf. *b. Sanh.* 11a).<sup>67</sup> The idea of worthiness is deeply important in mystical pursuits, as the reader should recall from HZ 335, 346, 407–12 (cf. HR 198; see §2.3.2.1, 2.3.3.1, 2.3.3.5). Interestingly, the idea appears just before our sugyah in the anecdotes of R. Elai b. Jebarekya. But it becomes implicit in our sugyah, where the encounter with Shekhinah is the privilege of those who occupy themselves in Torah and perform Tefillah.

### 7.3.1.2 *SPLENDOUR* (נִיב)

Second, we translate נִיב (from הִנִּיחַ: ‘to shine’) as ‘splendour’.<sup>68</sup>

Something with נִיב, or which is in a state of נִיב, possesses great beauty or glory (Dan 4.33; 5.6, 9, 10; 7.28; 1 Kgs 6.1, 37; *b. Roš Haš.* 11a).<sup>69</sup> In rabbinic versions of the nourishment motif, it is the נִיב of Shekhinah that nourishes and sustains angels and humans who see it (e.g. *b. Ber* 17a; *b. B. Bat.* 10a).

*B. Soṭah* 49a depicts נִיב as a property that transfers from Shekhinah to the disciple during study and prayer by way of mystical encounter. This transaction may be an example of the anthropological Law of Contagion, wherein a property passes from a *host* to a *target* via direct contact.<sup>70</sup> It is an ingesta which contains otherworldly nourishing and satisfying properties. In *b. Soṭah* 49a, the disciple absorbs this נִיב through the eyes and, as we shall see, reaps dynamic rewards.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. יָסִיךְ above in chapter two.

<sup>68</sup> Urbach, ‘Shekhina’, 45–6; Abelson, *Immanence*, 85; Davidson 236.

<sup>69</sup> Jastrow 392.

<sup>70</sup> James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922); Carol Nemeroff and Paul Rozin, “You are What You Eat”: Applying the Demand-Free “Impressions” Technique to an Unacknowledged Belief, *Ethos* 17 (Mar 1989): 50–69 [54–9]; Jesper Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic* (CSRS; Lanham, Md.: AltaMira, 2007), 100.

### 7.3.1.3 SATISFY (שבע)

Third, the verb **שבע** ('satisfy') tells us how this transaction occurs and its effects on the disciple. *B. Soṭah* 49a asserts that the splendour of Shekhinah 'satisfies' those who view it as if he or she has eaten a bountiful meal or lived a good life (Exod 16.8; Isa 66.11; Pss 63.5; Jer 50.19; *b. Sanh.* 58b; *b. Men.* 21b; *b. Šabb.* 113b; *Gen. Rab.* 52.2). It connotes 'fullness', 'satisfaction' or 'satiation'. In the nourishment motif, it refers to the deep-seated satisfaction resulting from the ingestion of the radiance of Shekhinah.<sup>71</sup>

Our sugyah specifically uses the term **משביעיין**. **משביעיין** is the plural masculine hif'il participle of **שבע**.<sup>72</sup> That it is a participle suggests the 'satisfaction' is a present, continuous experience. One might conceivably translate **משביעיין** something like 'they are satisfying', indicating that the disciple is currently 'being satisfied' from the splendour of Shekhinah.

How, then, does the splendour of Shekhinah satisfy the disciple? Recall that the entire sugyah centres on finding a solution to the situation facing the Jewish people in the wake of 70 C.E. It is this situation to which R. Judah refers as **דחק** and Isa 30.20a as 'the bread of adversity and water of affliction'. The dreadful situation demands an equally momentous solution. According to our talmudists, the means to overcoming this dreadful situation is the occupation in Torah and performance of Tefillah, which then lead to an experience of 'satisfaction'. Presumably, the solution to the problem—that is, the experience of satisfaction—must be remarkable enough to lead the disciple into a state in which the circumstances pressing him or her are, at least temporarily, overcome. Thus the quality of **שבע** in this case must be of a transcendent sort, and it

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<sup>71</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 80.

<sup>72</sup> Levias 59–60, 79, 87–94.

must be far more substantial than that of an everyday sort (i.e. the satisfaction one receives from eating a bountiful meal or from achieving a lofty goal). In lieu of the missing Temple, the disciple can therefore encounter God directly and reap the sating benefits of such an experience.

#### 7.3.1.4 *THE STRUCTURE OF THE SUGYAH*

The structure of our sugyah, beginning with R. Abbahu's comment, further evinces the visionary nature of the disciple's experience. It consists of four propositions, each juxtaposed with one another. The dialectic nature of the sugyah is such that each statement both elucidates and is elucidated by the others. The structure is as follows:

- A. R. Abbahu: 'They are satisfying him from the splendour of Shekhinah'.
- B. Isa 30.20b: 'Your eyes shall see your teacher'.
- C. R. Aha b. Hanina: 'The Pargod shall no longer be drawn closed before his face.'
- D. Isa 30.20c: 'Your Teacher shall not hide himself any longer' (Isa 30.20).

By placing the two rabbis in dialogue with Isa 30.20, our composers articulate an experience of mystical vision that occurs behind the celestial Pargod, before the face of God, and leads to a state of transcendent 'satisfaction'. To gaze upon the teacher *is* to become sated or satisfied from the splendour of Shekhinah.

*Tg. Jon.* (late-first c. C.E.) interestingly understands Isa 30.20 in terms of a visionary experience, much the way our composers do:<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Robert Hayward, 'Targum', in *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine: Proceedings of the British Academy 165* (eds. M. Goodman and P.S. Alexander; Oxford: OUP, 2010), 235–52 [237–8].

He shall no longer remove his Shekhinah from the Temple. 'And it shall come to be that your eyes shall behold my Shekhinah (חז"ן ית שכ"נתא) in the Temple' (בבית מקדשא).

Even though *Tg. Jon.* does not point to God's face is the object of gazing, as do our composers, he does describe a vision of Shekhinah, which our composers do as well.<sup>74</sup> He also locates the visionary experience in the Temple, as does *b. Soṭah* 49a (cf. *Tg. Jon* Ezek 48.35; Hab 2.20; Joel 4.17, 21; Zech 2.14–15; 8.3).

There is hardly any doubt that our sugyah is describing an experience during which the disciple ingests the 'splendour of Shekhinah' and becomes 'satisfied' from it. This entire experience takes place while the disciple occupies himself in Torah study and performs the various *tefillot*, or prayers. This is surely an experience of transformation, though our composers are rather less forthright on this point. It would appear that they assume a good deal of knowledge on the part of their readers, particularly about the more common aspects of this type of mystical experience. In order to see the transformative nature of this experience, we should survey the broader late-antique ideological milieu within which our sugyah's proprietors seem to be operating.

### 7.3.2 MYSTICO-THEOPHAGIC TRANSFORMATION IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

The composers of our sugyah in *b. Soṭah* 49a inherit a rich tradition surrounding mystico-theophagic transformation. The biblical writers have lain the foundation for such notions, even if by accident. Rabbinic interpreters have picked up on two particular biblical traditions and taken them to support their views of the mystical experience.

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Tg. Onq* Exod 33.20 renders שכינה as Shekhinah. See also Leivy Smolar et al., *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (LBS; New York: KTAV; Baltimore Hebrew College, 1983), 135–6, 221–2.



### 7.3.2.1 GOD AS AN EDIBLE BEING

The first complex of tradition that finds new meaning in rabbinic thought is based on Ps 34.9(8), where we read simply, ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’ (טעמו וראו כי טוב יהוה). Certainly someone so inclined would find sure support for mystical inclinations in this terse biblical statement. ‘Tasting’ and ‘seeing’ would then easily be understood as the object. To see God would therefore be to eat him.

This interpretation of the Psalm, can be found in one talmudic account. In inquiring as to why Scripture compares God to an apple tree (Songs 2.3), *Exod Rab.* insists that ‘in [God] there is taste and scent’ (ויש בו טעם וריח, 17.2), citing Ps 34.9(8) as a proof text. It then states that ‘in him there is food’ (ויש בו מאכל), again citing Prov 8.19 as a proof text. The theology these interpreters have constructed from Ps 34.9(8) is that God is an edible being, while the anthropology corresponding to this theology presumes that certain humans are capable of eating God. This anthropology becomes more evident below (§7.3.2.2). This theology and anthropology could easily have given support to ancient Jewish mystico-theophagy.

Interestingly, Ps 34.9(8) does not appear anywhere else in rabbinic literature in a mystical context. Fourth-century Christian writers St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Mystagogic Catecheses* 4.6) and St. Ambrose (*De Virginitate* 16, 99) do use the verse, however, to support their view of the Eucharist (cf. Jn 6.51–7; 1 Cor 10.16; 11.23–5).<sup>75</sup> The Rabbis seem to have avoided using the biblical texts their Christian neighbours were using to speak of the phenomenon. And while aware of others’ ideas concerning the

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<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *Magic*, 195; de Jáuregui, *Orphism*, 354–58; Smith, *Theophagy*; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult* (NA 15; Münster: Aschendorff, 2d ed., 1986), 366–8; Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, ‘The Qumran Meal and the Lord’s Supper in Paul in the Context of the Graeco-Roman World’, in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in honour of Alexander J.M. Wedderburn* (JSNTSup 217; eds. A. Christophersen et al.; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 221–48.

edibility of God in a Eucharistic setting, the Rabbis have clearly relegated the notion to the visionary realm over against a literal *meal* event.

#### 7.3.2.2 MOSES, THE ANGELS AND THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE WORLD TO COME

The second complex of biblical tradition ambiguously insists that God's face bestows mystical benefit to those who behold it. Beliefs concerning God's face in *b. Soṭah* 49a are not without biblical antecedent. The HB provides interpreters reason to view God's face in such a way. Ps 16.11 reads, 'You will make me know the way of life. *Satisfying* (שבע) joy is your face'. Ps 17.15 similarly asserts, 'I, in righteousness, shall behold your face. I shall be satisfied (אשבע) upon waking in your likeness' (cf. Pss 27.4, 13; 42.3; 63.3).<sup>76</sup> Prov 16.15 reads simply, 'In the light of the king's face there is life'. And Neh 9.6 ambiguously claims, 'And you [God] sustain (מחיה) them all'.<sup>77</sup>

Especially significant are traditions surrounding Moses' encounter with God at Sinai as recorded in Exod 24.10–11. As noted above in §6.2.4.2, Moses and company are said here to have gone forty days and nights without food at Sinai. At this time, 'they beheld God and ate and drank' (וישתו ויחזו את האלהים ויאכלו; vv. 10–11). Many rabbis took this account as sure proof that Moses, while at Sinai, beheld God, derived nourishment from the splendour of God's face and became like the angels in heaven.

##### 7.3.2.2.1 MOSES AT SINAI

Given the ambiguity of Exod 24.10–11, it became common to recast Exod 24 (cf. chs. 33, 34) as a statement to the effect that at Sinai, 'Moses . . . fed

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<sup>76</sup> Mark S. Smith, "Seeing God" in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible', *CBQ* 50 (1988): 171–83.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Blessing 2 (גבריות) of the Amidah, where מחיה appears five times in various forms.

upon Shekhinah', (*Lev Rab.* 20.10; cf. *Num Rab.* 2.25; *b. Ber.* 7a). Moses is alleged to have looked upon God and thereby ingested *through his eyes* the light-stuff emanating from his face. *Deut Rab.* 11.3 adds that Moses' facial transformation is proof that his dietary needs changed and thus that he became an angel-like being.

The terse, ambiguous claim of v. 11 led to a host of speculation as to what really took place at Sinai. Whereas vv. 10–11 do not mention a vision of God's face per se, Moses and company clearly 'saw God' (וַיִּרְאוּ), 'beheld God' (וַיַּחֲזִיאוּ) and, strangely, 'ate and drank' (וַיֵּשְׁתוּ וַיֹּאכְלוּ). Moreover, the language used here in v. 10 suggests the episode was probably influenced by early Merkavah speculation. ספיר, for example, appears in Ezek 1.26 and 10.1 in Ezekiel's famous Merkavah visions, and מעשה appears also in Ezek 1 in reference to the אופנים (v. 16).

The Merkavah-mystical nature of Exod 24.10–11 would surely have influenced the way later interpreters understood the ambiguous remarks about seeing, beholding, eating and drinking. It is easy to see how mystical minded Jews would have read v. 11 in the light of v. 10 and interpreted Moses' experience as a case of what we are calling mystico-theophagic transformation. Moses' experience became a paradigm for their own. He is the prototype of one who encountered God directly, beheld his glory and reaped the transformative rewards of God's radiance (cf. Philo, *QE* 2.39; 4Q374 2 ii 8; *Jos. Asen.* 14–17; HZ).<sup>78</sup>

This view of Moses extended into the rabbinic period. *Mek. Rab. Simeon* (fourth/fifth c. C.E.) offers an intriguing interpretation of Exod 24.10:

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<sup>78</sup> Fletcher-Louis, '4Q374', 237; idem, 'Reflections', 298; Chesnutt, 'Perceptions', 113–32; Goodman, 'Do Angels Eat?' 160–75; Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch* 91–108, 723–4.

‘And they saw the God of Israel’ (Exod 24.10). It teaches that their eyes were nourished from the splendour of Shekhinah (מלמד שניזונו עיניהן מזיון השכינה; *Mek. Rab. Simeon* כספא 82.3).<sup>79</sup>

*Mek. Rab. Simeon* employs the term זיון, which has to do with ‘being nourished’. Moses and company apparently saw God and obtained mystical nourishment from the ‘splendour of Shekhinah’.<sup>80</sup>

*Tg. Ps-J.* attests to the link between the ‘splendour of Shekhinah’ motif, which lies at the heart of *b. Soṭah* 49a, and the Moses-Sinai tradition.<sup>81</sup> *Tg. Ps-J.* reads, “The splendour of the features of [Moses’] face shone because of the splendour of the glory of the Shekhinah of the Lord’ (*Tg. Ps-J.* Exod 34.29; cf. *Tg. Ps-J.* Exod 34.35; *Tg. Neof.* Exod 34.29, 35; *Tg. Onq.* Exod 34.29, 35).<sup>82</sup>

*Lev Rab.* offers a similar redeployment of the Moses-Sinai tradition (fourth/fifth c. C.E.).<sup>83</sup> Like *Mek. Rab. Simeon*, *Lev Rab.* interprets the tradition in terms of what we would call a mystico-theophagic transformation:

‘Moses . . . fed upon Shekhinah (וַיִּנְהַג מִן הַשְּׂכִינָה). As it is written, “Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shining” (Exod 34.29) . . . “The Lord spoke to him face to face” (Exod 33.11). As a reward for, “He was afraid” (Exod 3.6), he earned the privilege of, “And they were afraid to come near him” (Exod 34.30). As a reward for, “Afraid to look” (Exod 34.30), he earned the privilege of “And he beholds the likeness of the Lord” (Num 12.8— *Lev Rab.* 20.10; cf. *Num Rab.* 2.25; *b. Ber.* 7a.).<sup>84</sup>

What we translate ‘to feed’ (נִהַג) literally means ‘to derive benefit’.

However, the ‘benefit’ Moses derived from Shekhinah is such that it

<sup>79</sup> Hebrew text of *Mek. Rab. Simeon* is that of W. David Nelson, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai: English and Hebrew* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2006), 374; cf. Chernus, *Mysticism*, 82; Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl, 257–9.

<sup>80</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 74–87.

<sup>81</sup> Chernus, *Mysticism*, 75.

<sup>82</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, ‘Blessing’, 100; idem, *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity* (SAIS 10; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 109–278.

<sup>83</sup> Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl 288–91.

<sup>84</sup> On *Lev Rab.* 20.10, see Max Kadushin, *A Conceptual Commentary on Midrash Leviticus Rabbah: Value Concepts in Jewish Thought* (CJS; Binghampton, N.Y.: Global Publications, 2001), 140.

replaced his need for food and drink, so our translation seems justified. Moses' outward transformation is proof of his change in dietary needs. In fact, *Deut Rab.* actually makes the claim that Moses' transformation was wholly physical. For Moses is said to have stated of his experience, 'I spoke with Shekhinah face to face, yet my eyes were not dimmed' (*Deut. Rab.* 11.3).<sup>85</sup>

*Midr. Tanh* (fifth c. C.E.) likewise attempts to explain how Moses et al. were able to survive without 'supplies' at Sinai:<sup>86</sup>

R. Hoshaia said: Did they take supplies with them when they ascended Sinai? Since it says, 'And they beheld God, etc.' (Exod 24.11). This means that they feasted their eyes on Shekhinah (שִׁכְיָנָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם) like a man who stares at his friend while eating and drinking.

R. Johanan said: *This became to them actual physical-sustenance and drink* (וְשָׂתְיָהּ וְרֵאיוֹן אֱלֹהִים). As it is written, 'In the light of the king's face there is life' (Prov 16.15—*Tanh.* 7 אֲחֵרֵי מוֹת [Buber]).

*Tanh.* asserts that Moses and company survived at Sinai because Shekhinah became the meal that nourished and sustained them *physically*. Prov 16.15 is taken to mean that God's face literally gives life to those who behold it. Thus Shekhinah is like a lavish feast for the eyes and *physically* sustains those who ingest it.<sup>87</sup>

Of further importance is that many rabbis understood the Sinai event as an 'ascension on high' (*b. Šabb.* 111a; *b. Hag.* 14a; 15a; *Gen Rab.* 48.14; *Exod Rab.* 27.9; 28.1; 40.2; *Num Rab.* 12.8).<sup>88</sup> 'On high' (מָרוֹם), (רִקְיעַ or מַעְלָה) is of course a technical term for heaven, a place where transformation is not only possible but probable. As we read in the Bavli:

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 45.

<sup>86</sup> Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl 302–6.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Chernus, *Mysticism*, 83; Goldberg, *Untersuchungen*, 276.

<sup>88</sup> But see *b. Sukkah* 5a, where R. Jose insists Moses did not ascend to heaven.

One should never break away from custom. For behold, Moses ascended on high and did not eat bread (וְלֹא אָכַל לֶחֶם), whereas the ministering angels descended below and ate bread (*B. Meši'a* 86b).<sup>89</sup>

And R. Tanhuma states similarly, 'When Moses ascended on high, where there is no eating or drinking, and he was comparable (וְנִדְמָה) to them' (*Exod Rab.* 47.5). נִדְמָה, the niphal of דָּמָה, indicates the passiveness of Moses' taking on the likeness of those around him (cf. *b. Qidd.* 32b; 4Q491c 1 5–11). There is something intrinsic about the heavenly environment that causes ontological change. Why this is the case is difficult to know. Nevertheless, Moses was able to go so long without food and drink at Sinai because he travelled to heaven, where he became like others therein.

The circle behind *b. Soṭah* 49a were aware of traditions surrounding Moses' transformation at Sinai. Even though they do not mention him in our sugyah, the tractate itself mentions him some 80 times: he occupied himself in the commandments (13a); prayed before God (37a); and beheld the Shekhinah at the Red Sea (30b). *B. Soṭah* 5a even states that the Shekhinah abode on Sinai. The absence of forthright mention of Moses in our sugyah is likely because the talmudists assume that their readers are aware of Jewish mystical tradition involving Moses and aim to describe *how* to obtain an experience like his rather than to detail *what* it looks like.

#### 7.3.2.2.2 THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN

A corollary to this understanding of Exod 24.10–11 is what it relates about the sustaining nature of God's face. It sustains the angels in heaven at the present. The Rabbis reasoned that if Moses saw God, ate and drank his splendour and became like the angels in heaven, then the angels in heaven *must also* subsist on the divine light-stuff. *Pesiq. Rab.* explains:

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Gen Rab.* 2.2; *Num Rab.* 21.16; *Pesiq. Rab.* 16.2; 48.3; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 6.1; *Abot R. Nat.* A 1.3a; 3 *En.* 22.7, 13; *Tanḥ.* פִּינְיָה 12; Chernus, *Mysticism*, 77–9.

R. Isaac said: The verse ‘my offering, my food’ (Num 28.2) asks the question: Is there before me food and drink? If you say that there is before me food and drink, then learn from my angels, learn from my ministers. As it is written, ‘His ministers are blazing fire’ (Ps 104.4). From whence are they nourished (מהיכן הן ניוונים)?

R. Judan in the name of R. Isaac says: From the splendour of Shekhinah (מזיו שכינה). As it is written, ‘In the light of the king’s face there is life’ (Prov 16.15).

And R. Haggai in the name of R. Isaac says: Scripture asserts, ‘You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, the highest heavens, etc. And you sustain them all’ (ואתה מחיה את כלם, Neh 9.6). And *you are the sustenance* of them all (ואתה מחיה לכולם, *Pesiq. Rab.* A 16.2; cf. 6.2).

*Pesiq. Rab.* asserts that God does not just *provide* sustenance to all, he *is* sustenance. *Pesiq. Rab.* redeploys Neh 9.6, which ambiguously claims of God, ‘And you sustain them all’, to make the point that God does more than *provide* sustenance, he *is* sustenance.

*Pesiq. Rab.* also uses ‘nourishment’ (נין) and ‘to give life’ (מחיה) synonymously. They signify the *type* of benefit that comes from the light of God’s face. To make this point, *Pesiq. Rab.* points to Prov 16.15, which reads simply, ‘In the light of the king’s face there is life’. The text’s point is this: ingestion of God leads one to become like the angels and ministers in heaven, who are ‘blazing fire’ (אש לוהט).

Interestingly, the terms that *Pesiq. Rab.* A 16.2 draws from Neh 9.6 are also found in Blessing 2 (גבורות) of the Amidah. This is important, because the Amidah is key to R. Judah’s statement in *b. Soṭah* 49a (see §7.2.4.1). Cognates of מחיה appear five times in Blessing 2 (גבורות) alone. God is the ‘restorer’ (מחיה), the one ‘who revives the dead’ (מתים), ‘makes life’ (ומחיה), is faithful ‘to revive’ (להחיות), and again the one who ‘revive[s] the dead’ (מחיה המתים).<sup>90</sup> Like *b. Soṭah* 49a, both *Pesiq. Rab.* and Blessing 2 (גבורות) draw on the same ancient motif which declares that God gives life to those who encounter him.

<sup>90</sup> I am grateful to Robert Hayward (private communication) for his observations on this point.

Prov 16.15 is used elsewhere in a similar manner to describe God's face not just as light but as life. *Tanh.* נשנ 18 applies this verse to the PB, articulating:

'May the Lord light his face upon you'. 'Shine upon you from the light of his face'. And *not only is his face light, but it is life* (וְאֵין יָאֵר אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים). As it is written, 'In the light of the king's face there is life' (Prov 16.15). And it says, 'The Lord is God. And he shines his face upon us' (Ps 118.27). Thus it says, 'May God show favour to us and shine his face upon us' (Ps 67.2). 'May the Lord lift his face, etc' (Num 6.26—*Tanh.* נשנ 18 [Buber]; cf. *Tanh.* נשנ 10).

The midrash describes God as an ingesta, or a form of nourishment that enters not through the mouth but through the eyes. *Sipre Num* (third c. C.E.) also interprets the PB this way, explaining, "The Lord make his face shine upon you" (Num 6.25) actually refers to "the brightness of Shekhinah" (*Sipre Num* נשנ 41).<sup>91</sup> And in a slightly different manner, *Tanh.* מוה' אהר' 7 use Prov 16.15 as a lens to interpret Exod 24.11.

#### 7.3.2.2.3 THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE WORLD TO COME

Finally, like Moses, the righteous in the world to come will need no earthly food or drink to survive. For they will exist on God's light-stuff like the angels in heaven. Rav is said to have spoken about this openly and often, insisting: 'In the coming aeon . . . the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and *derive benefit* (נִהְנֵה) from the splendour of Shekhinah' (*b. Ber.* 17a). The righteous will not need earthly sustenance, because they will eat of God's splendour. Not surprisingly, Rav points to Exod 24.11 as proof of this doctrine.

A second talmudic comment makes the same point. In this case, we read simply, 'The Holy One Blessed be He shall satisfy them [the worthy person] from the splendour of Shekhinah (מִשְׂבֵּיעַן מִזֵּי הַשְׂכִּינָה) in the World to Come' (*b. B. Bat.* 10a). These persons are 'worthy (רְאוּי)

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 44; Strack-Stemberger-Bockmuehl 266–8.



to go before the face of Shekhinah' and become 'satisfied' (אֲשַׂבֵּעַ) by his likeness (cf. Ps 27.4).

### 7.3.3 SUMMARY

The circle behind our sugyah in *b. Soṭah* 49a were surely aware of the complex of traditions surrounding Moses' transformation at Sinai. They also viewed Moses' Sinai experience as exemplary of the way the angels in heaven and the righteous in the World to Come survive by eating God's splendour through the eyes. For as we have shown, the idea of mystico-theophagic transformation was widespread among ancient Jews. Unlike other accounts of this tradition, however, *b. Soṭah* 49a puts forth a programme for achieving the experience.

## 7.4 A SUMMARY OF RABBINIC JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

For the composers of *b. Soṭah* 49a, humankind lost contact with God at the destruction of the Temple (NS). They are desperate to find a way to overcome the dreadful consequences left in the wake of 70 C.E. (P<sup>1</sup>). Intensive occupation in Torah and the rigorous performance of Tefillah lead to the DHE (P<sup>2</sup>), which presumably takes place *during* these engagements. The disciple makes the first move towards God (DHE: HA), but through the theophagic ingestion of God's splendour, God enters the disciple and saturates him or her like food and drink (DHE: MA). The splendour of Shekhinah mixes with the disciple in such a way that the two seem to blend together, only to the point that they become separate once again when the disciple *exits* the divine presence (*Mix* K). Once again, the natural outward centripetality (Centri*P*) of the human creature gives way during study and prayer—and all the discipline that accompanies these—to change the disciple into a centrifugal creature (Centri*F*). The resultant transformation is one in which the disciple becomes capable of eating God's splendour as if it were a bountiful meal, soaking it up into his or her

body, just as the angels do in heaven (MT: BH). And by this he or she overcomes the dreadful situation facing the Jewish people of late antiquity

### 7.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

After witnessing the Romans raze their beloved Temple to the ground, the Jewish people of late antiquity were compelled to seek God's presence *elsewhere*. By elsewhere is meant just that: they were hungry for an encounter with God not in *their* realm, but in *his*. Losing the Temple ignited a collective passion for the divine that manifested itself in a variety of ideas and practices.

The composers of *b. Soṭah* 49a have therefore recast Torah and Tefillah as, if we may, a *mystical temple*. Only through prayer and study can the disciple be ushered into the celestial Temple and behold God's Shekhinah behind the Pargod. At that moment, the struggling disciple becomes like the angels in heaven, absorbs God's splendour and, even if fleetingly, escapes the suffocating squeeze of קִּחָּךְ.

## **PART V**

### **CONFIGURING THE RESULTS**

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 PREFATORY REMARKS

The question that remains to be answered is this: what do the above accounts of mystical transformation reveal about ancient Jewish ontoanthropology? Before answering this, it should be helpful to have the ontoanthropological algorithm in hand. The algorithm is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & NS + P^1/P^2 + DHE (=DA|HA|MA) \\ & + Mix (= \Pi | \Sigma | K) + CentriF | CentriP \\ & = MT (=TRH|BH) \Rightarrow OA \end{aligned}$$

We need not repeat our explanation of the constituent factors in the algorithm at this point. The reader should consult §1.5 in our first chapter for such explanation.

#### 8.2 TOWARDS AN ANCIENT JEWISH ONTOANTHROPOLOGY

We are now in a position to lay out a preliminary or tentative sketch of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. Bear in mind that this is by no means conclusive. It is a sketch based on what we have ascertained from the foregoing explorations that is in need of further dialogue, critique and substantiation from others.

##### 8.2.1 NS + PP + DHE + MIX + CENTRI = MT $\Rightarrow$ OA

Ancient Jews entertained many different ideas with regard to questions about what it means to be human. Our own study has focused on ontological aspects of this, the human question. Perhaps not surprisingly,

we have uncovered a number of often divergent answers to the same question. Differences arise, for example, when we ask the different varieties of Judaism precisely what mystical change looks like and what causes it to come about.

But amid the divergences, it seems safe to say that there are certain fundamental assumptions—a narrative, perhaps—underlying ancient Jewish anthropology that manifest themselves differently in each of the varieties of ancient Judaism. This narrative states that the ontological make-up of the human creature is intrinsically mutable (NS). Certain events in history have buried this potentiality deep within the human (P<sup>1</sup>). When the human creature engages in ascetical practices (P<sup>2</sup>), it weakens its outer part housing the inner part, moving it towards an experience of ontological change. What truly effects radical change in the human creature is the divine presence (DHE), the encounter with which can take a number of forms (DA|HA|MA). Whereas the ontological bounds of the human creature are generally thought to be centripetal (CentriP), under the right circumstances they can become centrifugal (CentriF). Indeed, such humans are depicted as having the potential to mix with divine things and beings as well as with other humans (Mix Π|Σ|K). The resultant change that occurs can take more or less one of two forms. The human creature can re-enter a state of being resembling that which humankind were created to possess all along but which was lost at the Fall. In this case they become *true* or *renewed* humans (MT: TRH). The human creature also has the potential to be changed into something that is no longer human. Thus they can become angel-like or divine-like creatures (MT: BH).

We might therefore offer something of a baseline summary statement of ancient Jewish ontoanthropology. Such a statement might look as follows. *The human creature possesses an inherent mutable potentiality for positive, ontological change upon encountering the divine, even in the present life.*

## **8.2.2 THE THESIS RESTATED, KEY IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

We cannot stress enough that our explorations are precisely that: exploratory. Our thesis is not an exhaustive treatment of ancient Judaism, Jewish anthropology, Jewish ontology, Jewish mysticism, or anything else. It is truly investigative.

### *8.2.2.1 THE THESIS RESTATED*

We have sought to demonstrate, and believe we have, that accounts of mystical change are important for two principal reasons. On one level, they reveal critical information about what their proprietors believed happens to the human creature when it encounters the divine directly, while still living, in the present life. On another level, such accounts shed fascinating light on the broader assumptions, philosophies and theologies undergirding the accounts themselves, namely, those having to do with the present ontological state of being of the human creature. Such accounts were no doubt well-crafted and well-conceived. Those behind the accounts truly believed in the reality of human mutability and were eager to understand the complexities and vagaries surrounding the experience of mystical change.

### *8.2.2.2 KEY IMPLICATIONS*

Our study has moved the field forwards on a number of counts. First, debate remains over whether or not mysticism or anything mystical even exists in ancient Judaism in the first place. We have added weight, however, to the argument that ancient Jews were prone to thinking about and engaging in mystical matters. This assessment applies not just to a

specific variety of Judaism but to the six with which we have dealt in the foregoing study.

Second, our study has demonstrated the presence of *unio mystica* in ancient Judaism. This is something that not even Gershom Scholem thought existed in ancient Judaism. What our study does with regard to the question of *unio mystica* is not to give a strict *yes or no* answer. Rather, we have shown that by finding the right way to talk about the question, and by employing the right tools, we can give a more nuanced answer befitting the various Genera and Species of ancient Judaism. What one then finds is clear expression of the experience of mystical union in ancient Judaism that takes a variety of forms.

Third, time and again scholars have assumed that when a human undergoes ontological change he or she always becomes an angel. We have put this assumption to the test against the evidence of the texts and have found it to be untrue in a great majority of cases. Certainly humans are thought to be able to become angel-like, taking on a number of ontological and vocational qualities that angels possess naturally. But most of our texts have made the point—deliberately at times—that while a transformed human and angels in their natural state have much in common, the former is still not the same as the latter. Some transformative experiences are such that the human becomes something altogether new or beyond what he or she is thought to be naturally (BH). Others, however, entail a change in which the human becomes what he or she already is intrinsically, as it were, realising the ontological potentiality residing within (TRH).

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, we have moved the conversation forward with regard to whether or not ancient Jews believed ontological change even to be possible in the present life. We have found that *the presence of God cannot but effect ontological change in humans who encounter it directly*. In some cases, God's presence is too great for humans to withstand in their natural ontological state of being.

The only sure remedy is for the human to be made able to survive in God's presence. As we have seen, such change takes a number of forms. With the exception of Paul, in none of the texts we have discussed have we had trouble distinguishing between an ethico-moral change and an ontological change. That is, the debate over whether God's presence actually changes humans ontologically in the present life or merely empowers them to live differently has been entirely moot. Ethics and morality always seem to play a role in leading to the transformation, as humans are required to adhere to strict praxis in order to encounter God and undergo subsequent transformation. And it is often the case that such changes lead to a new ability to live differently, as Paul seems to think.

Even in Paul, though, the ontological versus ethico-moral debate seems to focus on a dichotomy that Paul never made. For like his contemporaries, he too thought the spiritual presence of God to be that which separates the new covenant from that of Moses and all others. And he thought this spiritual presence, upon meeting and mixing with humans, to have ontological, *new-creative* properties. The presence of the Spirit among believers has changed them in such a way that *they are compositionally different from those who are without the Spirit*. Their present existence is now the same as that of the place where Christ lives: heaven. Only because of this change are they now able to live according to the new Christian ethic.

Now, while the distinction between ontological and ethico-moral change seems unnecessary, the issue of materiality remains important. We have not found evidence to support a wholly materialistic view of transformation, neither in Paul nor anywhere else. Even if Philo and Paul share certain elements of Stoicism in their thinking, we cannot say for sure that they go so far as to think of transformation in material terms.

At best we have observed transformations that are quasi-material in nature. The fact that the human is thought to be able to ingest the divine presence indicates that the divine has a composition that is



compatible with that of the human body, or at least the body of those who have experienced transformation. And the way certain accounts depict the human as coming to mix with the divine, even to the point of fusing together, is further suggestive of a quasi-material understanding of transformation. No doubt this is an area in need of further study using our approach or one similar to it, as it has implications not just for Pauline studies but for our understanding of ancient Judaism as a whole.

#### *8.2.2.3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS*

We realised early on that the field lacked the tools necessary for studying such matters. There were no consistent definitions in place and there was no systematic approach to the subject. This unsystematic approach to Judaism and mysticism led many scholars to overlook many of the rich texts that we now know have much to offer.

Our study has therefore sought not only to provide answers to questions surrounding human mutability and mystical change in ancient Judaism, but it has sought to give the field a standardised way to approach, investigate, discuss and formulate our thoughts on such matters. We have offered a number of definitions, shown the efficacy of supplementing careful exegesis with multiple approaches and methods, categorised the whole of ancient Judaism taxonomically, and constructed an algorithm that has proven useful in finding and sorting the many constituent pieces that comprise the various textual accounts of mystical transformation. And while our study is exploratory in nature, having had to leave many promising ancient Jewish texts aside, it has not simply left them outside without a future in the conversation. It has given them an identity, a label by which scholars may now draw them into the conversation of *Jewish mysticism* where they would not previously have had a place. Texts that have long been ignored because of their failure to mention a throne, temple or journey to heaven now find themselves with

a place in the conversation under one of the four genera of the mystical-transformative experience.

### **8.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

We noted in the opening line of our exploration, and our study has proven with relative assurance, that ancient Jews have long inquired into what it means to be human. As so many seem to appreciate, the human question is only understood when asked in the light of the human creature's relation and proximity to God and his realm. Only when near to God is the human creature truly as God intended—the **צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים**. Here and only here, by way of mystical encounter, can the human creature realise its intrinsic mutable potentiality, and this even in the present life.

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